

### The end of national models? Integration courses and citizenship trajectories in Europe

Jacobs, Dirk; Rea, Andrea

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**“Migration and Integration in  
the Asia-Pacific Region”**

## Migration and Integration in the Asia-Pacific Region

DIRECTOR OF PUBLICATION: Paul de Guchteneire

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# **Thematic Introduction: Migration Challenges in the Asia-Pacific Region in the Twenty-First Century**

AMARJIT KAUR AND IAN METCALFE\*  
*University of New England, Armidale*

**T**rans-Asian labour migration, a defining feature of Asian globalisation prior to 1940, comprised mainly Chinese and Indian emigration to Southeast Asia and was quantitatively and qualitatively as significant as European transatlantic migration. Although migrant workers were regarded as *sojourners*, they established diasporic communities across the region, particularly in Malaysia, Singapore and Thailand. After the Second World War and problems of decolonisation, unskilled labour migration came to a halt.

Since the 1980s, Asia and Australia have re-emerged as major players in global migration in terms of its scale, diversity and significance. The emergence of new regional migration patterns, the rapid growth in the demand for professionals and skilled migrants in specific occupational categories, and the creation of subregional labour markets are all manifestations of the scale and diversity of current migratory movements in the region.

In the first decade of the third millennium, moreover, migration is receiving more attention in public discourse than ever before. As immigration has become an ever-present feature of the political landscape in the United States and Europe, polls in Australia have also showed that it was among the public's top concerns. Further, while asylum issues and the Australian Government's "Pacific Solution" have captured public attention, legal and illegal immigration concerns have also mushroomed in the main labour destination countries of Malaysia and Thailand. These concerns are not without basis. For example, Australia had the largest proportion of overseas-born population in 2001 compared with other major immigration countries. In Singapore, migrant workers comprise about 30 per cent of the country's workforce. Both Malaysia and Thailand have large migrant workforces and there are concerns that illegal migrants outnumber legal migrant workers.

The waves of migrant workers, whether those arriving under high-skilled points schemes or low-skilled workers destined for agriculture, manufacturing, construction and the service sectors, have led to the economic migration scheme being restructured, and better border control systems instituted. Australia stands at one end of the spectrum, restructuring its economic migration programme to admit employable skilled migrants, and emphasising integration and a citizenship test.

Singapore is the only Southeast Asian country that offers settlement to its high-skilled foreign workers. At the other end of the spectrum are Malaysia and Thailand, who welcome high-skilled and low-skilled workers, but do not give settlement to them. They too face increasing asylum numbers. The roots of these migration streams lie in these countries' economic development strategies and their geographical proximity to poorer, more densely populated countries. Despite their evolving guest-worker schemes, they regularly conduct regularisation programmes and offer amnesties to illegal migrants. It is estimated that illegal or undocumented migrant workers outnumber documented migrant workers. Interestingly, both countries are sources as well as destinations of migrant workers.

The greater mobility in the last three decades, its increasing transnational character, and the fact that connections between place of origin and place of destination are now more easily maintained, necessitate a greater understanding of the fluidity of movement. Moreover, these changes also require a greater ability on the part of the state to provide migrants with better integration opportunities, in order to cope with the challenges of a more transient migrant population.

To examine these and related issues, a Workshop on Migration Challenges in the Asia-Pacific in the 21st Century was convened at the University of New England, Armidale (Australia) in November 2006. The workshop also focused on governance and border-management strategies of major states in the region in the face of intensified transnational economic and social processes, and the expanding global governance regime. The papers selected for this issue cover these major themes.

Amarjit Kaur provides a background to the growth of international labour migration in the Asia-Pacific region in recent decades and the connections between residency and labour requirements. Current enforcement strategies are a response to new and evolving forms of movement, issues of border control and the presence of undocumented migrants. The paper also raises some important emerging issues including new regional migration patterns, the fast growth in the demand for professional, skilled and low-skilled migrants in specific occupational categories, and the creation of subregional labour markets in three countries in the Asia-Pacific region – Australia, Singapore and Malaysia.

In her paper, Tessa Morris-Suzuki proposes that there are two fundamental contradictions at the heart of the contemporary global system. Over the next few decades, national governments and international institutions may find ways to address these contradictions, but doing so will require fundamental changes in the way that the global order works. Alternatively, governments and international bodies may *fail* to find ways of addressing these contradictions, in which case the global order will be transformed in the sense of becoming increasingly fractured and chaotic. The two fundamental contradictions centre upon use of natural resources and migration. With regard to migration, she argues that the problem is not in itself the movement of people, but the increasingly evident incapacity of

nation-states to respond with vision and imagination to the challenges posed by growing mobility, which is an escapable part of the global order.

Michael Leigh argues that while many of the broader discussions of globalisation and rationalisation convey an air of inevitability, most neither advocate nor address the vexed issues raised by the free flow of people. There are various interrelated elements that help to explain the unwillingness to even broach this issue, the key one being the very basis of nationhood, governance, and how representative institutions have been structured within the geographical boundaries of the nation-state. The paper also explores the relationships between globalisation/regional integration, nationhood, and the different sources of sovereignty and legitimacy, focusing on the role of labour flows, and how these constrain the process of regional integration.

Christine Inglis reviews how quantitative and qualitative changes in the nature of international migration and population movements over the last two decades have brought discussions of these movements and their longer-term implications to the forefront in national and international policy. She specifically deals with the theoretical paradigm of transnationalism to identify and address contemporary trends involving migration and policy, especially in the current environment of uncertainty and insecurity.

Binod Khadria outlines how the migration of “knowledge workers”, who are in effect far more mobile globally than either finance or physical capital, has been kept clubbed with labour and hence isolated from the process of embodiment of skills, through investment in education and training as human capital. The paper explores two contrasting pictures: a telescopic view where Indian immigration of skilled workers fits closely to the Western model of global geo-economic conflict of interests over different time horizons; and a microscopic view where Indian immigration of skilled workers to the poor island economies of the Pacific could be seen in a challenging new light of regional cooperation for mutual development. Both pictures highlight issues arising from the challenges of the transnationalisation of skills subsumed in the migration of people across man-made boundaries.

Aswatini Raharto outlines the phenomenal growth of international labour migration from Indonesia, including major trends, the importance of the movement, and the issues of illegal migrants and protection for labour migrants. The paper also provides case studies of Indonesian labour migration to countries such as Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam to highlight some of the issues discussed.

Lenore Lyons and Michele Ford’s paper addresses the intersections between the processes of internal migration within Indonesia and international labour migration flows from Indonesia through a close analysis of migration flows in one of Indonesia’s key transit areas – the Riau Islands. They argue that in the borderlands the processes of internal and international migration are mutually constitutive. The

Riau Islands' status as a transit zone for international labour migrants and a destination for internal migrants determines its demographic profile and policies of migration control. Bordering practices are strongly influenced by the fact that not everyone who comes to the Riau Islands has the intention of moving on, and not all international migrants returning to the islands intend to go home.

### Note

\* We are most grateful to the Academy of the Social Sciences in Australia under whose auspices the 2006 workshop at the University of New England was convened. UNESCO Australia and the Australian Research Council Asia-Pacific Futures Research Network provided funding for the workshop. Supplementary funding came from the Faculty of Economics, Business and Law, University of New England and the Asia Pacific Regional Migration Research Network (UNE and ANU).

### About the Authors

Amarjit Kaur is professor of economic history at the University of New England, Armidale (Australia). Her research interests include globalisation and labour migration, evolving border controls in Southeast Asia, and the politics of labour protections and human rights policies in Asia. Recent publications include *Wage Labour in Southeast Asia since 1850* (2004) and, co-edited with Ian Metcalfe, *Mobility, Labour Migration and Border Controls in Asia* (2006). Email: akaur@une.edu.au

Ian Metcalfe is adjunct professor in the School of Environmental and Rural Science, and deputy director of the Asia Centre at the University of New England. His diverse research interests include earth sciences (tectonics, palaeogeography and mass extinctions) and socio-economic (gender and labour studies and migration) and environmental (climate change) issues relating to East and Southeast Asia. Email: imetcal2@une.edu.au

# Migration Matters in the Asia-Pacific Region: Immigration Frameworks, Knowledge Workers and National Policies

AMARJIT KAUR\*

*University of New England, Armidale*

*In the past three decades the Asia-Pacific region has experienced a major wave of immigration despite tighter migration policies and better border controls. Southeast Asia has been prominent in this change, with some countries being important sources and destinations of skilled and unskilled migrants. Australia has also increased its migration quotas, particularly the skilled migration intake. The emergence of new regional migration patterns, the fast growth in the demand for knowledge workers and skilled migrants in specific occupational categories, and the creation of subregional labour markets are all manifestations of the scale and diversity of recent migratory movements in the region. Key factors accounting for these developments include disparities in economic growth; income and poverty levels between countries; labour shortages arising from demographic transformations; structural change in labour supply; and the role of social networks and the migration industry as drivers of migration.*

Asia Pacific countries may be classified into three broad categories on the basis of their international labour migration characteristics, namely: mainly emigration; mainly immigration; and both emigration and immigration. The first category includes the Philippines, Bangladesh, India, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Nepal, China, Cambodia, Burma, Lao People's Democratic Republic, Viet Nam and Indonesia. The second category (mainly immigration) includes the Republic of Korea, Japan, Taiwan, Singapore, Hong Kong and Brunei, while Malaysia and Thailand are in the third category. Australia comes under the second category. Labour migration in the region can be divided into two systems. The first involves predominantly low-skilled workers who are employed as guest workers in low-status and low-paid occupations in the Asian Tiger economies (Singapore, Hong Kong, Rep. Korea, Taiwan, Malaysia and Thailand) and the Middle East. These workers are from South Asia, namely India, Bangladesh, Nepal, Pakistan and Sri Lanka and Southeast Asia, mainly Indonesia, the Philippines, Burma, Thailand and Viet Nam. The key features of the guest-worker system include employment on a temporary rotation basis, recruitment through intermediaries, and employment with



a specified employer on a fixed-term basis. The guest workers are also admitted under a variety of arrangements, usually memoranda of agreement. Estimates of stocks of Asian migrant workers in other countries are provided in Table 1.

**Table 1:** Asian Countries: Estimates of Stocks of Migrant Workers in Other Countries

Origin countries	Number	Main destinations	Year
<b>Southeast Asia</b>			
Burma/Myanmar	1100 000	Thailand	2001
Thailand	340 000	Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Myanmar, Singapore, Brunei, Malaysia	2002
Lao PDR	173 000*	Thailand	2004
Cambodia	200 000	Malaysia, Thailand	1999
Viet Nam	400 000	Rep. Korea, Japan, Taiwan	2005
Philippines	8083 815	Middle East, Malaysia, Thailand, Rep. Korea, Hong Kong, Taiwan	2004
Malaysia	250 000	Japan, Taiwan	1995
Singapore	150 000**	n/a	2005
Indonesia	3500 000**	Malaysia, Saudi Arabia, Taiwan, Hong Kong	2004
<b>Total</b>	<b>14 196 815</b>		
<b>South Asia</b>			
India	5 000 000	Middle East	2005
Pakistan	3 180 973	Middle East, Malaysia	1999
Bangladesh	3 000 000	Saudi Arabia, Malaysia	2002
Sri Lanka	1 500 000	Middle East, Malaysia	2005
Nepal	4 000 000	Middle East, India, Malaysia	2003
<b>Total</b>	<b>16 680 973</b>		
<b>North East Asia</b>			
China	550 000	Middle East, Asia and the Pacific, Africa	2005
DPR Korea	300 000	China	2002
Rep. Korea	632 000	Japan	2002
Japan	61 000	Hong Kong	2000
<b>Total</b>	<b>1 723 000</b>		

Note: \*undocumented \*\*documented

Source: Hugo (2006).

The second system involves knowledge workers and skilled professionals, predominantly from India, Bangladesh, Sri Lanka, Pakistan and the Philippines, who go mainly to North America, Europe and Australia, but are also drawn to the

Asian Tiger economies, and to middle-income countries such as Indonesia. Most destination countries, particularly Australia and Singapore, have made policy adjustments to attract knowledge workers and some categories of skilled migrants, and are admitting them for settlement as well.

South and Southeast Asia are the major sources of migrant labour in the region. Since immigration programmes increasingly emphasise a link between residency and labour requirements, the term “immigrant”, which often implies permanency or long-term stay, may no longer be appropriate for all categories of foreign workers. Rather, the term “migrant”, to describe the “temporary” movement or “mobility” of workers, is more appropriate, since this movement tends to be intermittent and/or short-term.

This paper examines key developments in international labour migration (ILM) since the 1980s against the backdrop of recent immigration frameworks, the refinement of skilled migration programmes and guest worker policies, and the reorienting of national policies from restricting immigration to coping with it. It also reviews the main policy issues that relate to professional, skilled and unskilled migration in destination countries. The study focuses on three case studies: Singapore, a developed East Asian country that has a well established policy for professional and skilled migration; Malaysia, an industrialising country that is a destination for both skilled and unskilled immigrants; and Australia, an OECD country which has an evolving policy for skilled migration.

## **1. Framing Temporary and Permanent Migration Programmes – Southeast Asia**

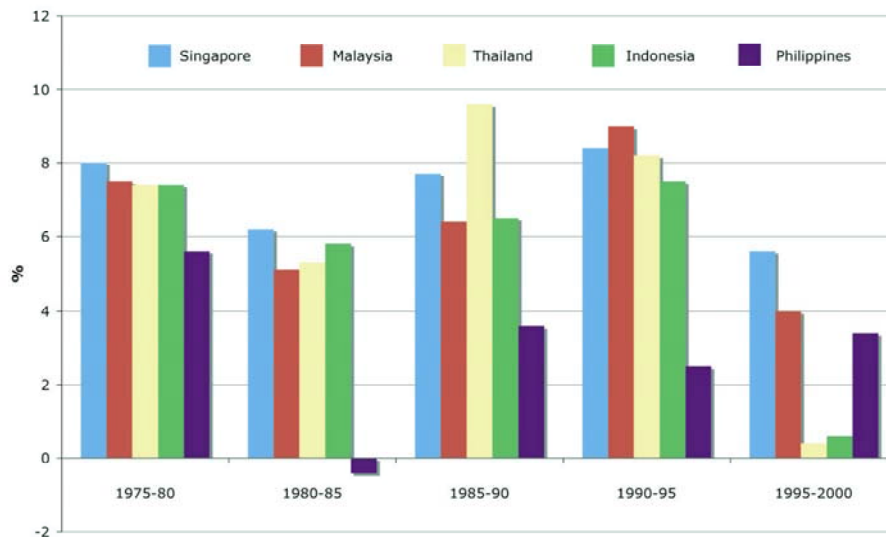
By the 1980s the five newly industrialising countries (NICs) of Southeast Asia – Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, the Philippines and Indonesia – had achieved sustained levels of economic growth based on export-led industrialisation strategies. Although the Asian economic and financial crisis of 1997–98 resulted in an economic downturn, the first three countries recovered and moved on to implement programmes for future growth. Indonesia has been slower to establish a solid platform for recovery while the Philippines has continued to experience political and security problems. These countries had formed the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) in 1967 (with Brunei joining later) to promote common political interests, and the organisation expanded in the 1980s and 1990s to include the other states in the region which had also embraced globalisation. Together the Southeast Asian states are engaged in multilateral efforts to promote freer and expanded trade through the ASEAN Free Trade Area.

The rapid growth in ILM was a response to disparities in the level of economic development among Southeast Asian states, demographic differences, and the role played by migration networks. Given that labour migration is primarily an economic phenomenon shaped by income and wage differentials between countries and the financial costs of transportation and communication, there has been a

strong incentive for people to move in Southeast Asia in recent times. The ending of a number of major conflicts in the region such as the Vietnam War also made it easier for people to emigrate. At the same time, however, poverty has not been the principal determinant of migration in this context. Although a large proportion of emigrants from Indonesia, the Philippines and Burma/Myanmar come from very poor areas, these migrants are not from the “poorest” categories; indeed they must provide substantial amounts of money to reach their destinations. These migrants also have access to loans in their local communities and from intermediaries involved in the migration industry.

The disparity in the level of economic development between the five NICs is shown in Figures 1 and 2.

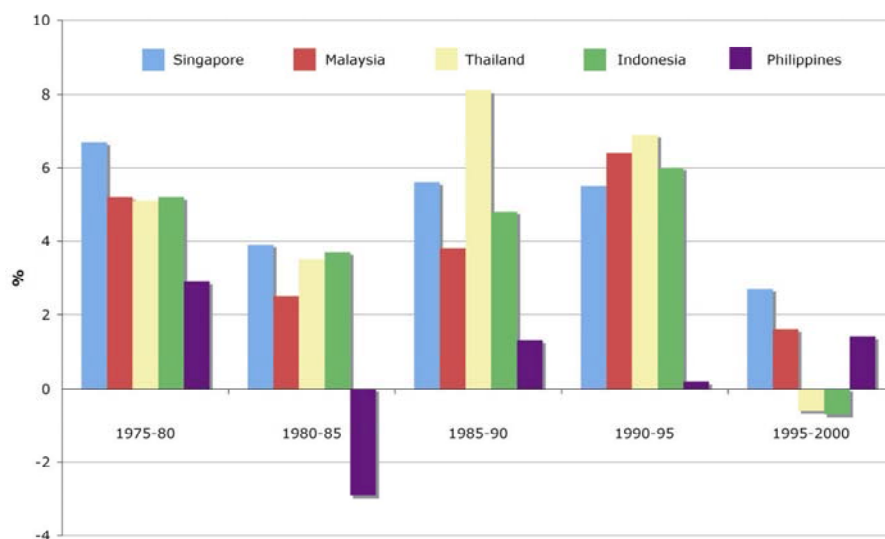
**Figure 1:** Southeast Asia: GDP Average Annual Growth Rate, Selected Countries (1975–2000)



Source: United Nations (n.d.).

Singapore, Malaysia and Thailand are the main destination countries for migrant workers, while Indonesia and the Philippines are the principal source countries. Malaysia and Thailand are both source and destination countries, although Malaysia receives far more migrant workers than it sends. Malaysia is also the largest labour importer in the region. In Thailand, although official policy is opposed to the state becoming a destination for less-skilled migrants, periodic amnesties and special registration exercises continue to allow their employment in labour-intensive enterprises.

**Figure 2:** Southeast Asia: GDP Average Annual Per Capita Growth Rate, Selected Countries (1975–2000)



Source: United Nations (n.d.).

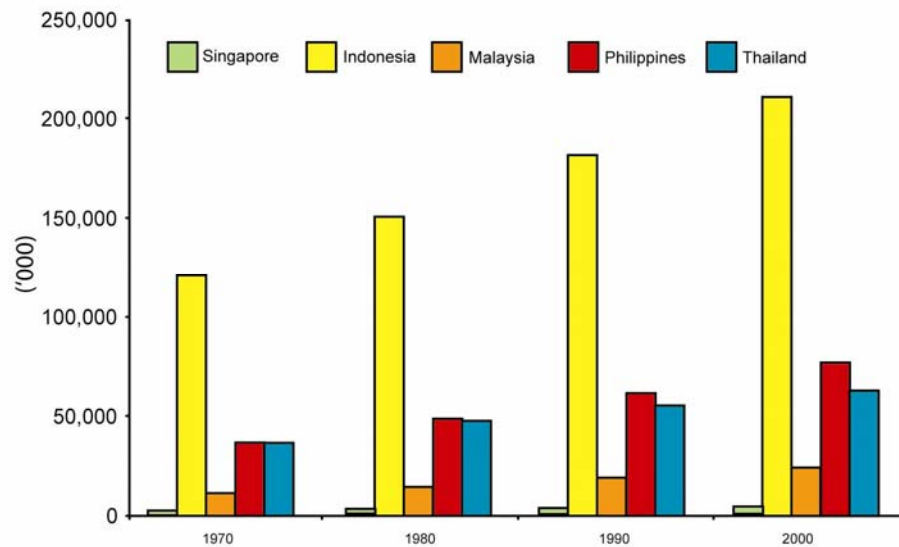
The GDP average annual growth rates for the period 1970–2000 indicate that all five NICs – Singapore, Malaysia, Thailand, Indonesia and the Philippines – recorded strong growth between 1975 and 1980. Economic growth was associated with job expansion in these countries, but not at uniform rates. The Philippines had negative growth between 1980 and 1985 although it recovered subsequently. In the early 1990s there was a series of financial crises in emerging market economies that threatened the stability of the entire international monetary system. In 1997 a financial and economic crisis started in Southeast Asia and Indonesia and Thailand were the countries worst affected in the region, as shown in Figure 2. The Philippines and Indonesia subsequently emerged as the largest labour exporters in Southeast Asia.

Within the context of the globalised world’s more elastic demand for the services of unskilled and semi-skilled workers – and the fact that workers from other countries can be substitutes for these worker categories more easily than others – divergence in development was a main factor in the growth of ILM in the region.

Demographic factors also assisted migration in the region and demographic imperatives are becoming ever more important, effectively guaranteeing increased ILM in the twenty-first century, as shown in Figure 3. Southeast Asia may broadly be divided into “labour scarce” and “labour surplus” countries and Indonesia and the Philippines have the largest populations in the region. The population of the five countries in 2000 was Singapore 4.0 million; Malaysia 22.2 million; Thailand 62.8 million; the Philippines 75.7 million; and Indonesia 212.1 million (UNDP 2002: 162–64).

These demographic differences among the countries have been crucial to changing labour circumstances in the region. Singapore and Malaysia, which had undergone demographic transition (followed by Thailand), experienced significant tightening of their labour markets by the 1970s. As a consequence, on the supply side the disparities in economic development and population between the “more” developed and “less” developed Southeast Asian countries created conditions of complementarity between the “richer” labour destination countries and the “poorer” labour source countries.

**Figure 3:** Southeast Asia: Population Growth, Selected Countries (1970–2000)



Source: UNDP (2002).

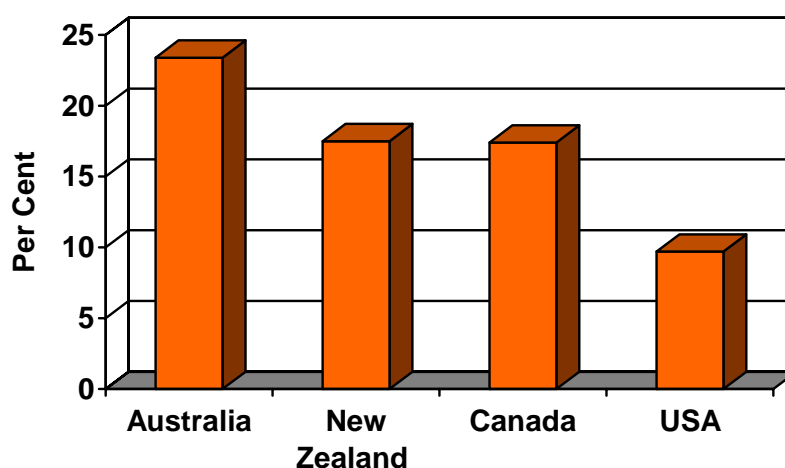
ASEAN, in particular the ASEAN Framework Agreement on Services (AFAS), which seeks to encourage temporary labour migration for services, trade and investment, has also played a pivotal role in ILM in the region. AFAS is a key regional agreement with the stated goal of moving towards an ASEAN “economic community” by 2020 (this has now been accelerated to 2015).

International labour migration has thus re-emerged as a key instrument for economic growth and for maintaining the economic productivity and competitiveness of the main destination countries. In the third millennium, therefore, the demand to increase legal immigration has coincided with hard-nosed economic reasons to refine immigration frameworks and simultaneously tighten border controls. The countries under study have thus re-designed their immigration frameworks to maximise benefits from skilled migration, and their policies are adjusted to fast track the supply of migrants in areas where they face labour shortages.

## 2. Australia

Immigration has played and continues to play a vital role in the country's demographic, social and economic future. More than 6 million people from overseas have settled in Australia since 1945, and nearly one in four Australians were born overseas. Australia also had the largest proportion of Australians born overseas in 2001 compared with other major immigration countries, as shown in Figure 4.

**Figure 4:** Australia: Comparative Proportion of Overseas-Born Population (2001)



Source: O'Callaghan (2006).

In 2001 about 4.5 million people (23 per cent of the population) and 2.4 million workers (25 per cent of the workforce) were born overseas (Australia, Productivity Commission 2006: xix).

Australia's immigration policy has historically been the most contentious area of Federal Government policy, since it has always involved a strong element of state control and a preference for European immigrants, particularly white British subjects (Jupp 2007: 271). Within the context of government/opposition and minor party policies on labour mobility, debates about the numbers and types of immigrants that ought to be let into Australia have consistently been linked to arguments about economic development and strategic concerns, as well as controversies centred on environmental sustainability, and issues of cultural identity and xenophobia. Migration has also become a pressing issue for a range of social actors that include private sector entities, trade unions, migrant and diaspora associations, and intergovernmental bodies. Moreover, immigration policy is enmeshed with population policy (of an ageing and declining population) and

discussions of fertility and mortality rates, intergenerational equity, and gender rights.

According to Jupp, Australian immigration policy has coincided with several historic phases, “each of which influenced subsequent practice” (Jupp 2007: 267). The “White Australia” policy, for example, which came into operation soon after Australia became a federal nation, had its roots in a series of restrictive legislative measures introduced in various Australian colonies from the mid-1850s. This policy favoured British immigration, although other European immigrants were not barred from immigrating to Australia. In the 1940s a number of individual decisions to deport non-European migrants from Australia sparked considerable domestic and international criticism of the “White Australia” policy, but the policy of discrimination against non-Europeans remained substantially unreformed (Tavan 2005). Policy gradually shifted towards multiculturalism when Harold Holt became prime minister in 1966. From 1972 the Whitlam Labor Party Government abolished the last remaining discriminatory aspects of Australia’s immigration policy and these changes were endorsed at the end of 1975 by the Fraser government. In 1975 Australia ratified the International Convention on the Elimination of All Forms of Racial Discrimination. Additionally, Australia accepted large refugee intakes from Viet Nam and Lebanon in the mid-1970s (Jupp 2007: 271).

Essentially, economic considerations lie at the heart of Australia’s immigration policy. The migration programme for permanent immigrants is divided into two main components: the general “Migration” programme and a “Humanitarian” programme. Under the general “Migration” programme, there are three classes of migration: Skilled, Family and Special Eligibility migration. The Skilled stream includes many different visas but, overall, it is described as being “specifically designed to target migrants who have skills or outstanding abilities that will contribute to the Australian economy”. Since the 1990s the Special Eligibility stream is intended for former permanent residents who satisfy specific criteria. The Humanitarian component provides for the immigration of refugees and others in need of humanitarian assistance. Within this stream, there are currently two categories of permanent visas (Australia, Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs 2005*b*, 2006). Since 1966 the skilled category has replaced the family reunion category as the main migration category (Jupp 2007: 272).

The most important changes to immigration policy over time have coincided with Australia’s quest for “trained foreign talent”. This has resulted in the proportion of skilled immigrants in the migration programme increasing from 29 per cent in 1995–96 to about 70 per cent in the planned level for 2005–06 (Productivity Commission 2006: xix). A second major shift has been the growing proportion of skilled migrants being selected through onshore applications by overseas students who were admitted on temporary visas and graduate from local universities. This is referred to as the “two-step” migration policy. There has also been a shift in intake towards Asia, consistent with the diversification of country of origin of migrants. A

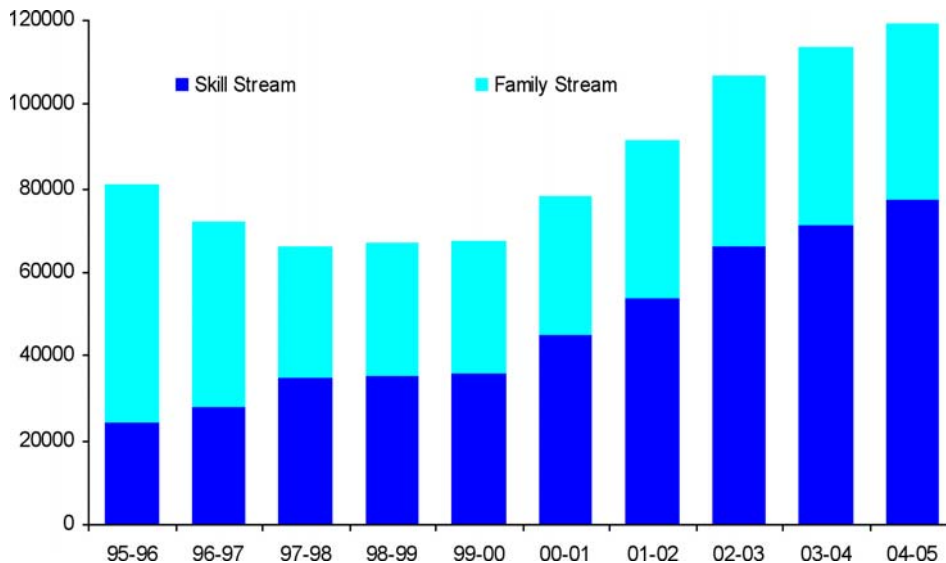
skills shortage, especially in rural and regional districts, has equally had a very significant role in shaping the bias towards skilled migrants. Hence Australia accepted 77,880 skilled migrants in 2004–05 and this figure rose to 97,340 in 2005–06 (Immigration Department, cited in the *Australian*, 2 May 2007). These figures point to skilled migration becoming the dominant motivator of Australia's acceptance of permanent migrants and include temporary or "guest worker" migrants recruited under the (business) temporary visa programme.

### 2.1. Governance of skilled migration and the migration/development nexus

As noted earlier, migration is viewed as central to Australia's demographic, social and economic future since it contributes to higher living standards, greater income equality and larger government budgets. Moreover, much of the policy debate on migration and economic growth has focused on migration designed "to further the national interest" and the positive contributions of migrants. Notwithstanding this, Australia has moved away from its previous policy of "unconditional" permanent settlement to guest worker migration (guest workers are permitted to change their status if their jobs become "permanent").

The growth of skilled migration relative to the family stream is shown in Figure 5.

**Figure 5:** Australia: Changing the Balance between the Skill Stream and Family Reunion Scheme (1995–96 to 2004–05)



Source: O'Callaghan (2006).



The family stream has remained fairly constant compared with the skill stream. In 2004–05, the Skill Stream accounted for around 65 per cent of visas granted under the Migration Program (Australia, Productivity Commission, 2006: 44–45).

## *2.2. Skill stream*

*Permanent skilled migrants* are admitted under two subcategories: the sponsored category or the independent category. Under the first are included various schemes such as the Employer Nomination Scheme, Labor Agreement and Distinguished Talent. These migrants are admitted to allow Australia to meet the challenges of the global economy, particularly in the services sector. Skilled Independent Applicants are admitted solely on the basis of employable attributes. They have to undergo rigorous selection criteria that award points in areas that include age, education, English language ability, skills and work experience in selected skilled occupational categories. This “points system” is regarded as a “human capital accumulation” mechanism since points are awarded for “certain individual characteristics” valued by countries at a given time. This system has been adopted by Canada, Australia, New Zealand and the United Kingdom, and other European countries are currently considering adopting it (Papademetriou 2007). Most migrants in Australia are admitted to fill skill shortages in either the general category or State-Specific and Regional Migration categories. This system has been “hybridised” to admit skilled migrants under the 457 visa subclass, since firms are now allowed to recruit workers either directly or through the agency of labour-hire firms.

The Skilled Independent visa is also one of the main visa groups accessible to overseas students (see above). An increasing proportion of these visas have been granted onshore following a change in immigration policy from 1 July 2001. This policy change has benefited Australian-educated overseas students who possess qualifications in high demand in Australia. Furthermore, these graduates are allowed to apply for this visa type without leaving the country on completion of their studies. About 35 per cent of the 41,108 Skilled Independent visas granted in 2004–05 were to overseas students (Australia, Productivity Commission, 2006: 44–45).

## *2.3. Temporary skilled migrants/guest workers*

The Temporary Visa Program (TVP) incorporates the Temporary Business Entry visa class, Working Holiday Makers and Overseas Student visas. These skilled migrants are admitted under temporary visas and are required to return to their countries unless they are given authority to extend their stay, or stay permanently. The subgroups include 456 short-stay or holiday workers; 457 long-stay skilled workers; 471 apprentices and trainees.

According to the Australian Manufacturing Workers’ Union (AMWU), for every permanent skilled migrant settling in Australia under the skill stream in 2005–06,

there was more than one 457 visa being issued. Further, this period also marked a shift in migration history since “there were more temporary skilled 457 visas granted than skilled permanent visas” (AMWU 2007: 17). The AMWU also states that a blurring of apprenticeship schemes has resulted, with employers preferring to use subsidies for short term training to employ “cheaper” guest workers. Some migrants who are admitted under this scheme are able to gain permanent residence through the points system, which is used as a basis for selecting those with relevant skills. Another recent trend is that Asian firms have become important players in sponsoring guest workers from their home countries under the 457 visa subclass.

The growth in 457 visa approvals is provided in Table 2.

**Table 2:** Australia: 457 Visa Approvals (1996–97 to 2005–06)

Financial year	Principal applicants	Total	Change (%)
1996–97	n.a.	24 000	n.a.
1997–98	n.a.	33 000	37.5
1998–99	n.a.	33 000	0.0
1999–2000	n.a.	34 965	6.0
2000–01	21 076	40 493	15.8
2001–02	19 569	37 597	–7.2
2002–03	22 155	42 363	12.7
2003–04	23 992	40 633	–4.1
2004–05	28 030	49 855	22.7
2005–06	40 000	70 000	40.4

Note: n.a. = not available.

Source: Department of Immigration and Multicultural Affairs, cited in AMWU (2007: 17).

Temporary skilled workers under the 457 subclass are normally permitted entry to Australia on the basis that they are skilled workers and sometimes on the basis that they are sponsored by an employer, and on the condition that their employer will pay them a minimum rate of pay and comply with Australia’s workplace laws. Nevertheless, many temporary migrants are recruited through labour hire firms that are reported to charge employees for services even though they have used employer-sponsored skilled migration visas (*Australian*, 2 May 2007). Thus the Australian government has increasingly come to rely on the temporary skilled worker scheme to address its changing economic needs. One of the features of the 457 visas is that an employee is not prevented from changing employers. But if the employee loses employment then, if they cannot find new employment, their visa lapses after 28 days. It has also been alleged that employers have dismissed Australian workers in favour of temporary overseas workers to reduce their wages bill. These employers are “small” employers, employing less than 100 employees and probably even less than twenty employees (*Australian*, 2 May 2007).

Recent media reports have focused on the exploitation of workers with 457 visas in a number of industries in Australia. Allegations include underpayment and substandard working conditions. Foreign workers have also been made to work in unskilled jobs not permitted under their visa conditions (*Sydney Morning Herald* 14 June 2007; see also United States Department of State, *Trafficking in Persons Report 2007* – Australia). It is expected that current policies to fill structural labour shortages in an increasingly knowledge-based economy will continue. Moreover, recent policy changes include a greater emphasis on skilled work experience and English language achievement, with a focus on employability. Unfortunately, in the Government's plan to deliver migration that is in the national interest, human rights concerns are not being accorded a central position in the politics and policies of Australia's immigration policy.

### 3. Singapore

Like Australia, immigration has played a key role in Singapore's demographic, social and economic history (Saw 1980; Turnbull 1977: 4; Kaur 2005). At the time of Malaya's independence in 1957, Singapore's population was 1,445,929 (Saw 1980: 12). In 1963 it joined the Malaysian federation but left two years later and became an independent country. Following independence, Singapore gave export trade and foreign investment a central place in its development strategy and was a beneficiary of the global redistribution and reorganisation of production. The government's export-driven industrial strategy was consistent with free trade policies, a reliance on foreign direct investment, the creation of a tightly disciplined and skilled labour force and strong government intervention and direction. Apart from heavy industry – the construction of drilling rigs and ancillary vessels for off-shore petroleum extraction and tanker construction and repair – other industries included the production of textiles and apparel, electrical and electronic goods, notably semi-conductors, integrated circuits and later, disk drives. In the manufacturing sector, Value added rose from S\$348.4 million in 1965 to S\$8521.9 million in 1980. Employment in this sector rose from 47,334 in 1965 to 285,250, while the value of manufactured exports rose from S\$933.3 million in 1965 to S\$12368 million in 1979 (in 1985 market prices). Consequently, Singapore's Gross Domestic Product grew, in real terms, at an average annual rate of 13.6 per cent between 1966 and 1969, and at 8.3 per cent between 1970 and 1979 (Dixon 1991: ch. 5; Hill 1993).

Concurrently, Singapore's development objectives become increasingly dependent on foreign labour intakes. The increased internationalisation of capital, growing intra-firm linkages and the demands of the knowledge-based economy have intensified this process. Singapore thus faced the dual challenges of rising structural unemployment due to economic restructuring on the one hand, and the need to provide knowledge workers on the other. The demand for bigger migration programmes for skilled and unskilled labour consequently led to a second new phase in international migration to Singapore (Kaur 2004b: ch. 9).

### 3.1. Governance of migration

Overall, the Singapore Government's immigration strategy rests on a policy combination that aims to balance the constraints between achieving the country's longer-term goals of industrial-upgrading and technological change on the one hand, and, on the other, maintaining competitiveness in the shorter term (Manning and Bhatnagar 2006). This policy combination is closely integrated into national development strategy through an elaborate arrangement of migrant levies on lower-skilled workers, incentives for highly skilled professionals, and strict regulation of these policies through a quota system (Kaur 2007). At the same time the state has adopted a nation-building strategy based on multiracialism to safeguard the rights of racial, linguistic and religious minorities in Singapore (Chan 1991: 159).

As outlined in Singapore's *Manpower 21 Report* (which saw the Ministry of Labour renamed the Ministry of Manpower), augmentation of the national labour force with foreign labour is a key element in the country's economic plans and policies for the foreseeable future. The six core strategies listed include: Integrated Manpower Planning; Lifelong Learning for Lifelong Employability; Augmenting the Talent Pool; Transforming the Work Environment; Developing a Vibrant Manpower Industry; and Harnessing Collective Energies. Further,

Singapore has always leveraged on foreign manpower at all levels to enhance our economic growth. The employment of foreign manpower is deliberate strategy to enable us to grow beyond what our indigenous resources can produce. As we transit to a knowledge economy, we need to ensure that our manpower augmentation policies remain relevant and effective.

Thus, like Australia, Singapore's employment (work pass) entry requirements demonstrate the government's preference for the "right type" of workers, that is, those who possess skills and talents. The current immigration framework has also progressively been modified to attract those with higher qualifications, as well as businesspeople and entrepreneurs.

The employment entry requirements are spelt out in *The Employment of Foreign Workers Act* that regulates the employment and residence criteria of foreign workers. Essentially, there is a two-tier framework comprising the *Employment Pass*, which admits entry of professionals and skilled migrants; and the *Work Permit*, which permits entry of less-skilled foreign workers. These categories also correspond with skill and salary levels, the bond payable by the employer for work permit holders (to ensure that less-skilled temporary workers leave upon completion of contracts) and whether the migrant worker is eligible for residence (settlement). The eligibility criteria for the Employment Pass are outlined in Table 3.

**Table 3:** Employment Pass P & Q Eligibility Summary

<i>Type</i>	<i>Eligibility</i>
P1	Fixed monthly salary > S\$7,000 Professional, managerial, executive, specialist jobs
P2	Fixed monthly salary > S\$3,500 Professional, managerial, executive, specialist jobs and recognised qualifications
Q1	Fixed monthly salary > S\$2,500 Recognised qualifications. In lieu of recognised qualifications, other compensatory factors such as skills and years of experience may also be considered (recommended – minimum of five years relevant work experience)

Source:

[http://www.mom.gov.sg/publish/momportal/en/communities/work\\_pass/employment\\_pass/about\\_the\\_pass.html](http://www.mom.gov.sg/publish/momportal/en/communities/work_pass/employment_pass/about_the_pass.html)

Briefly, the P Pass is aimed at professionals/knowledge workers whereas the Q Pass is for highly skilled workers. These workers may work in any sector of the economy; they are not subject to levies and are allowed to apply for residency or citizenship. They are also eligible for government-sponsored housing and can apply for the Dependant's Pass and/or Long-Term Social Visit Pass for their family members.

A recent policy move corresponding to the Australian points system for skilled independent migration has been a modification of the P Pass system by the addition of a Personalized Employment Pass (PEP). PEP is aimed at selected Employment Pass holders and foreign students from institutions of higher learning in Singapore. Potential applicants are required to have earned a minimum fixed salary of S\$30,000 in the year preceding the application. Additionally, applicants are required to have been employed for a minimum period of two years on a P Pass or five years on a Q1 Pass. Foreign students from institutions of higher learning in Singapore are also required to have at least two years of work experience on an Employment Pass. The PEP is valid for five years (non-renewable).

The S Pass, a new category of work pass that replaced the Q2 Pass in July 2004, is issued to foreigners earning a monthly basic salary of at least S\$1,800. Here too, applicants are assessed on a points system based on multiple criteria including salary, educational qualifications (degree/diploma in a technical field), job type, and work experience. Only those S Pass holders paid a fixed monthly salary of more than S\$2,500 qualify for Dependant's Pass privileges. All S Pass holders are subject to a monthly levy of S\$50 (US\$32). The objective of the S Pass is to increase flexibility and responsiveness of the foreign manpower framework to meet the needs of industries for skilled manpower at the middle level (Government of Singapore, Ministry of Manpower).

The *Work Permit* (or “*R*” *Pass*) is designed for less-skilled workers and need not detain us here. Suffice it to say that it has two categories: R1 (for foreign workers possessing National Technical Certificate, similar to a trade qualification) issued to a “semi-skilled” foreigner earning a monthly basic salary of not more than S\$1,800; and R2 (for unskilled, mainly domestic workers). These passes are usually for one or two years and ensure that these categories of workers are not only temporary, but function as a transient workforce, whose stay is dependent on general economic conditions. There are also restrictions on the country of origin of applicants. Both S and R Pass holders are subject to quotas (“dependency ceilings”) and levies and the work permit system is an important tool for addressing the changing economic needs of Singapore (Kaur 2007).

### 3.2. Dimensions of the foreign workforce

It is estimated that Singapore’s foreign workforce increased from 3.2 per cent in 1980 to about 30 per cent in 2000, as shown in Table 4.

**Table 4:** Singapore: Size of Foreign Labour Force (1970–2000)

Year	Total labour force	Foreign workers	Percentage of total labour force
1970	650 892	20 828	3.2
1980	1077 090	119 483	7.4
1990	1480 000	200 000	13.5
1995	1690 000	350 000	20.7
2000	2000 000	600 000*	30.0

Source: Gaur (2006: 198).

In 2005, the foreign workforce in Singapore totalled about 620,000, comprising 72,000 Employment Pass holders; 540,000 Work Permit holders (including 150,000 domestic workers); and 8,000 S Pass holders (Yap 2006: 4). This foreign labour force is also racially diverse, originating from Australia, Canada, China, India, Indonesia, Malaysia, the Philippines, the United Kingdom and the United States.

From the above discussion, it is clear that Singapore prioritises skilled migration (which corresponds with permanent migration) in its race to compete with other countries in the new industries. Skilled workers on Employment Passes are granted access to subsidised health care, education and housing. But Singapore has a poor track record in its treatment of the work permit category, particularly domestic workers. Workers are eligible for work permits for up to two years and these may be renewed up to a total of four years. Employers of workers in this category are

also required to post a security bond of S\$5,000. The bond is used to guarantee repatriation of workers upon expiry of the work permit.

Apart from lower pay, unskilled foreign workers (including domestic workers) also face additional restrictions in the form of limits to personal freedoms. Reunion of workers' dependants is prohibited, as is marriage to a Singapore national, without the prior permission of the Singapore Government. Female domestic workers, who earn between S\$200 to S\$250 a month, are required to pay about S\$600, or three months salary, to recruitment agents to get contracts. They have to undergo mandatory pregnancy tests and are deported if they become pregnant (they may, however, elect to have an abortion to avoid deportation) (HRW 2005; Kaur 2007). The country's main labour laws, namely the *Employment Act* and the *Workmen's Compensation Act* apply to skilled and unskilled workers, but exclude protections for domestic workers. Domestic workers are not acknowledged as being employed in the "formal" economy, and remain marginalised in Singapore's "success" story.

#### 4. Malaysia

Malaysia's economic landscape and transformation since the 1970s coincided with an increased demand for labour, and the influx of migrants into the country has largely metamorphosed into the exploitation of a labour force cheaper than national workers. Prior to the Second World War, Malaysia was built on the backs of immigrant workers and labour migration from China and India was a defining feature of Asian globalisation. Chinese and Indian immigrants had outnumbered the indigenous "Malaysians" by 1940 and they comprised 45 per cent and 10 per cent of the population respectively in 1947. Consequently, the state's current migration goals and labour recruitment policies are shaped by the political, social and cultural contexts of migrant workers, memoranda of agreement with source countries and the lobbying power of various employer groups in Malaysia.

Malaysia has now become the largest labour-importing country in Southeast Asia. According to official and media reports, migrant workers from all over Asia currently constitute about 2.8 million of the 12 million labour force (*Malaysiakini* 21 February 2007). Malaysian law distinguishes only two main categories of migrants: documented or "legal" migrants and undocumented or "illegal" migrants. The first category includes people who enter (and are allowed to stay) in Malaysia and who hold passports, visas, work permits and other valid documents, as required by the immigration legislation. The predominant group in this category comprises contract migrant workers in possession of a work permit and the necessary documents issued by the Malaysian authorities. A smaller but not insignificant group comprises professionals who possess skills that are in short supply in the country and who tend to be in the computing, medical and engineering fields, and who are generally more highly trained than the average Malaysian. It has been argued that the government continues to neglect investment in skills and prefers to use immigration to draw in professionals and skilled migrants.

Three key legislative instruments – the *Immigration Act*, the *Employment Act* 1955/1998 and the *Penal Code* regulate the usage and governance of foreign labour. The Immigration Department oversees, and the *Immigration Act* 1959/1963 provides the basis for, immigration regulation and procedures in the country. The Department comes under the authority of the Ministry of Home Affairs. The inability of the Immigration Department to control the influx of migrant labour in the 1980s, and the absence of mechanisms to regulate this flow, resulted in a host of *ad hoc* measures to deal with the issue. In 1981 the Malaysian government passed legislation which sanctioned the establishment of authorised labour recruitment agencies. Various committees were formed to formulate policies relating to recruitment directly from source countries. The committees were also charged with stamping out irregular migrant inflows. Crucially, the Malaysian government also instituted a foreign worker levy system to reduce its dependence on less-skilled migrant workers (Kassim 2005). Much like Singapore, therefore, the Malaysian state regulates the employment of migrant labour and controls the socio-economic effects of its heavy reliance on foreign workers through the work permit system, the foreign levy scheme and internal enforcement measures.

The *Immigration Act* was further amended in 1997 and 2002, leading to the establishment of harsh penalties for immigration violations. It thus became a criminal offence for foreign workers to work without a work permit or visa and punitive measures, including the caning of workers, were implemented. Documented domestic workers, who had been abused or had run away from their employers, were also regarded as illegal workers and detained in detention camps. Errant employers who employed more than five illegal workers were also subject to fines, imprisonment and caning. Further changes included the establishment of a one-stop centre to reduce the processing period, disbandment of the technical committee, and limiting the Immigration Department's role to granting visas only (Kaur 2007).

Most migrant workers in Malaysia obtain their employment in the country through private employment agencies that operate in the source and destination countries. Domestic workers are largely recruited through labour agencies in their respective countries, working closely with private employment agencies in Malaysia. It has been widely reported that exploitation and abuse occurs at every stage of the migration cycle, including recruitment, training and transit. Unfortunately, regulation and monitoring of private employment agencies that handle the process of sourcing for labour, training and eventual placement in Malaysia is woefully inadequate. Essentially, there is no mechanism whereby such agencies could be held responsible, not only for the abuse or exploitation of migrant workers, but even for their basic welfare.

#### 4.1. Governance of migration

The regulations governing the recruitment of foreign workers are skill-based and are administrated separately for skilled and low-skilled workers. Skilled workers



are referred to as *pegawai dagang* or *expatriates* (the professional, technical and kindred group), while unskilled workers are *pekerja asing* (foreign contract workers). There are thus two types of employment-related work permits or work visas: an employment or work pass (*Pas Penggajian*) for expatriates; and a “work permit” or contract worker pass (*Pas Lawatan Kerja Sementara*) or a visit pass for the temporary (contract) employment of semi-skilled and low-skilled workers, including domestic workers.

#### 4.2. *Pas Penggajian/employment or work pass*

The work pass covers the employment of professional, technical and kindred (PTK) workers who are recruited for both the public and private sectors owing to skill shortages in the country. The salary cap for a PTK worker is RM2,500 per month. No limitations are imposed on source countries (with the exception of Israel and some African states) for such workers. The job tenure is two years (the maximum duration of tenure is five years). Workers may be an employee or be self-employed and are permitted to bring along their dependants. Expatriates are normally employed in multinational enterprises although an increasing percentage is employed in the medical sector, higher education and sports sectors (Kassim 2005: 267).

#### 4.3. *Pas Lawatan Kerja Sementara/visit pass for temporary employment*

The visit pass for temporary employment covers the manufacturing, construction, plantation, services and domestic worker sectors. Unskilled and semi-skilled workers are granted one year work permits, which are renewable up to five years (six years in total). There are age restrictions associated with these permits, and workers are disallowed from bringing dependants into the country. Consequently, no resettlement of dependants is allowed. There are also restrictions on source countries for this category of migrant workers (Kaur 2007).

Compared with the nationality-driven, sector-specific, conditional and arbitrary regime imposed on unskilled and semiskilled migrant workers, expatriates are treated differently. Nevertheless, expatriate workers are still regarded as a temporary worker phenomenon: there is no fast track to citizenship; in effect they have to be sponsored by an employer; their tenure is limited; and they are not allowed to marry nationals. Policy regarding expatriates falls under the Committee for Expatriate Workers, again comprising representatives from nine Ministries and approval for recruitment can come from a variety of agencies. Some changes have been implemented by the Department of Immigration in accordance with the overall direction of economic and employment policy. Outstanding is the fact that the age policy now includes a caveat which allows entry for individuals aged twenty-one years in “IT and Related Position[s]”, while “Other Management Position[s]” are denied entry until twenty-seven years of age. Moreover, in the case of working spouses, the fee schedule is appropriately skewed toward expatriates working in specific sectors. Employment pass fees for “important position[s]

(MIDA's approval)" and "management/high level/professional/technical position[s]" are set at RM300 and RM200 per annum respectively (in contrast to, for example, restaurant work, which attracts RM1,800 and RM1,440 for the Peninsula and Sabah and Sarawak respectively (*New Straits Times* 17 February 2005; *Sunday Star* 6 March 2005).

The extent of Malaysia's reliance on migrant labour in the context of economic growth and labour market changes is shown in Table 5.

**Table 5:** Malaysia: Contract Migrant Workers by Country of Origin (1998–2005) (%)

	1998	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2005
Indonesia	53.3	65.7	69.4	68.4	64.7	63.8	68.9
Nepal	0.1	0.1	0.1	7.3	9.7	9.7	9.9
Bangladesh	37.1	27.0	24.6	17.1	9.7	8.4	2.9
India	3.6	3.2	3.0	4.0	4.6	5.6	6.9
Myanmar	1.3	0.9	0.5	1.0	3.3	4.3	4.6
Philippines	2.7	1.8	1.2	1.0	0.8	0.6	1.1
Thailand	0.7	0.5	0.4	0.4	2.4	0.9	0.3
Pakistan	1.0	0.6	0.5	0.4	0.2	0.2	0.7
Others	0.2	0.2	0.3	0.4	4.6	6.5	4.7
Total	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0	100.0

Source: Malaysia, Department of Immigration, as cited in Government of Malaysia (2004/2005); for 2005, Kanapathy (2006: Table 2).

The continued flow of workers is inevitable, and Malaysia's trade and immigration policies have never been as closely connected as they are today, under the aegis of Mode Four of GATS in WTO. The key stipulation is migrant workers must either be employed by a "foreign firm with a commercial presence" or be "under contract" for the provision of a service. The government's legislative machinery thus set up contract labour programs, allowing employers to recruit migrant workers, who must remain employed or leave the country. The state also strengthens enforcement on the border and expels those with no papers out of the workplace and country. Thus, this trade in services has effectively sanctioned the practice of transient servitude.<sup>1</sup> Moreover, since migrant workers' visas are employer- or contract-bound, they are required to remain employed to maintain

<sup>1</sup> Most of these workers, who are considered low-status or "unskilled", have to endure highly exploitative or abusive treatment, and many work in conditions which meet the definition of forced labour as set out in ILO Convention concerning Forced or Compulsory Labour (No. 29).

their legal status in the country. Malaysia's immigration policy is consequently designed to supply workers when needed and to get rid of them when the need ends. At the same time, the government charges a variable levy (based on work classification) that adds to government coffers.

The Malaysian and Indonesian governments' lack of duty of care to domestic workers was taken up by Human Rights Watch and resulted in the publication of a report on abuses against female migrant domestic workers (HRW 2004). It was very critical of both governments for not providing protections for Indonesian domestic workers. In 2005, following the publication of the report, the Malaysian Government initiated a number of policy measures to provide certain safeguards for domestic workers (Kaur 2007).

## **5. Some Concluding Thoughts**

Immigration is a fact of life in the region and, despite periods of public unease, will remain so. However, migration policy-making in the region is increasingly taking place outside a human rights framework, and migrants are being treated not only as non-citizens, but essentially as people with no perceived rights. Paradoxically, while free trade and the mobility of capital are seen as important pathways to globalisation, the movement of people between nation-states is subject to violations of civil, economic and political rights. Knowledge workers form part of the "global talent" sought by most countries, and "skilled workers" may be lucky in some countries. But low-skilled migrants, and particularly domestic workers, can forget about their "fundamental" rights. And trafficked persons, refugees or asylum seekers can expect little better than detention and violation of their rights. As we celebrate the 200th anniversary of the Abolition of the Slave Trade Act, let us pause and reflect on the sobering fact that there are between 12.3 million and 27 million men, women and children living in contemporary forms of slavery associated with transient servitude<sup>2</sup> (US Department of State, various years).

## **Note**

\* School of Business, Economics and Public Policy, University of New England, Armidale, NSW, 2351. I would like to acknowledge the support of the Australia Research Council for funding my research on international labour migration and border controls in Southeast Asia.

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<sup>2</sup> United States Department of State Trafficking in Persons Reports, various years (<http://www.state.gov/g/tip/rls/tiprpt/2006/65983.htm>; accessed 1 May 2007).

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**About the Author**

Amarjit Kaur is professor of economic history at the University of New England, Armidale (Australia). Her research interests include globalisation and labour migration, evolving border controls in Southeast Asia, and the politics of labour protection and human rights policies in Asia. Her recent publications include *Wage Labour in Southeast Asia since 1850* (2004) and, co-edited with Ian Metcalfe, *Mobility, Labour Migration and Border Controls in Asia* (2006). Email: akaur@une.edu.au

# Cross-Border Migration and East Asian Regional Integration

TESSA MORRIS-SUZUKI\*

*Research School of Pacific and Asian Studies,  
Australian National University*

*Against the background of profound economic and political changes in East Asia, this paper examines key trends in migration within the region. It highlights the increasingly multidirectional nature of migration flows, the importance of undocumented migration, and the growing significance of secondary diasporas and return migration. While future large-scale flows of migration are likely, the changing nature of regional migration makes it more difficult for existing international frameworks to respond adequately to these cross-border flows. Against this background, the paper argues the need to develop new regional collaborative mechanisms, involving national and local governments as well as national and international NGOs, to respond to the challenges of East Asian migrations.*

The East Asian region is currently experiencing a period of profound transformation. The rise of China and signs of an impending resolution of the crisis on the Korean Peninsula are creating a new power balance in the region. Against this background, a number of political leaders and academic commentators have argued the need for new forms of regional integration to promote economic interaction and political stability. The ASEAN+3 configuration (including the ten members of the Association of Southeast Asian Nations together with China, Japan and the Republic of Korea) or the larger East Asian Summit (which also includes Australia, New Zealand and India) are often seen as providing possible frameworks for such integration.

The purpose of this paper is to argue the need for regional collaboration, not only on economic and security issues, but also on the issue of migration. I begin from the proposition that levels of international migration are likely to rise further in coming decades, and that the East Asian region will continue to be the locus for major cross-border flows of people. Yet in the contemporary global order, while nation-states need the skills and labour power that migrants bring with them, they also fear the implications of growing numbers of non-citizen residents within their borders. The irreconcilable conflict between the forces impelling human mobility and the forces which seek to control and constrain is indeed one of the most fundamental political problems of our age.

Here I survey some broad characteristics of migration in the region, and highlight reasons why existing international approaches to migration are failing to provide an adequate framework for responding to the challenges posed by current migration flows. In the final section, I argue that a regional framework for cooperation on migration is urgently needed, and that such a framework could encourage wider moves towards East Asian regional community-building. Precisely because this is such a pressing problem confronting all the countries of the region, it is also a problem that demands collaborative efforts at problem-solving. In particular, I suggest that the issue of migration is one area where non-governmental organisations, academic researchers, local governments and others can and should play a leading role alongside governments in developing cross-border initiatives for the East Asian region.

## **1. Globalisation and Migration**

In a survey of the future of migration, Lant Prichett of Harvard University's John F. Kennedy School of Government argues that a new "wave of mass migration is poised to break down the barricades protecting the world's rich and developed countries". He reaches this conclusion by comparing global conditions in the first decade of the twenty-first century with the conditions which propelled the great wave of migration of the late nineteenth to early twentieth centuries. The key factors behind that earlier upsurge of migration are, Prichett suggests, all present today. They include the growing interconnectedness of the world in terms of transport, commerce and financial flows; increasingly divergent population dynamics in different regions of the world; and widening income gaps between rich and poor countries. Indeed, Prichett points out that the wealth gap between migrant sending and migrant receiving countries is much greater today than it was in the nineteenth century, and is steadily increasing. In the 1870s, at the height of Irish migration to the United States, US wages were (in real terms) 2.3 times the level of wages in the Ireland; by the 1990s, wages in migrant-receiving Japan were 9 times the level of wages in migrant-sending Viet Nam (Prichett 2003).

Of course, the motives which encourage people to move across borders are far too complex to be reduced to economic statistics. Nevertheless, both historical experience and the logic of contemporary globalisation suggest that mass migrations are likely to be an important feature of global society in the coming decades. Yet at the same time, as many writers have observed, globalisation does not imply the destruction, or even necessarily the weakening, of national borders. On the contrary, our world is a global order of nation-states, in which states use cross-border flows to enhance their own positions in an ongoing competition between nations for greater wealth, power and prestige.

In such a globalised order of nation-states, human beings become the only vital resource whose movement is *not* increasingly liberalised, but is rather a source of increasing contradiction and tension. On the one hand, to compete successfully in the global system, nation-states need the cross-border movement of labour. In a



time of rapid technological change, for example, governments and corporations need to import workers with scarce skills, or those willing to perform the low-paid tasks that the state's own citizens find unattractive.

But on the other hand, labour is the one economic resource which is always embodied. In other words, imported labour always arrives with all sorts of complicating baggage: a human body, which needs rest and recreation, becomes ill, bears children, and ages; a human mind which contains not only skills, but also beliefs, political opinions, values and dreams. In economic terms, immigrants may (by and large) be seen as imported labour, but in political terms they are non-citizens, or perhaps potential citizens – a constant challenge to the boundaries of the national political community.

Problems of border control tend to become particularly contentious when the global geopolitical order is undergoing major changes. Today, whether in Japan, in Australia, in “fortress Europe” or in the United States, the rhetoric is of imperilled borders, threatened by “illegal immigrants” who are often associated in the public mind with disorder, crime or subversion. Meanwhile, however, the legacy of 9/11 and the “global war on terror” are promoting increasingly stringent border and migration controls in many countries of the world.

Just one example of the fears evoked by migration comes from a 2001 CIA report, *Growing Global Migration and its Implications for the United States*. This report recognises some possible benefits from well-regulated migration (“migration will ameliorate labor force and military manpower shortfalls”), but also paints an alarming picture of “surging illegal migration”, “implicit threats by foreign governments to use illegal migration and especially mass migration as leverage in bilateral relations”, and the danger that “social and economic developments in China have the potential to create a spontaneous mass migration emergency that could spiral out of control” (CIA 2001: 4, 13, 30, 39). Against this background, would-be migrants are now subject to more extensive and intrusive scrutiny than ever before, and countries which once prided themselves on their humanitarian refugee policies are increasingly appealing to the insecurities of voters at home with conspicuous displays of “toughness” towards “illegal immigrants” (including asylum seekers).<sup>1</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> The widely used term “illegal migrant” is somewhat confusing. It is often applied to asylum seekers who cross borders without official documentation. However, under international law this act is not “illegal”. In this paper I therefore generally use the word with inverted commas, or (where appropriate) refer instead to “undocumented migrants”.

## **2. Five Features of East Asian Migrations**

### *2.1. Complex, cross-cutting flows*

The East Asian region (however broadly or narrowly defined) is already the locus of some of the world's most significant movements of people, both "legal" and "illegal". In the space of this paper, it is impossible to chart all these migratory movements, but a few examples may help to highlight key features of migration in twenty-first century East Asia. Drawing mainly on examples from my own research, which mostly focuses on Northeast Asia, but also on some examples from Southeast Asia, I should like to highlight what I consider to be five key features of regional migration flows today.

First, regional migration flows today are, more than ever, complex and cross-cutting, with a number of countries playing the role both of migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries. Rapid social change in China, for example, is promoting mass population movements within and across China's borders, and by the start of the new millennium China was the major source of migration to OECD nations. At the start of the twenty-first century, it was estimated that about half a million people were leaving China each year, of whom about half were "illegal" migrants.

At the same time, however, China is increasingly becoming a target for immigrants, including skilled workers and large numbers of students. As of 2005, there were some 110,800 overseas students at Chinese colleges and universities, of whom the largest group (some 39 per cent) were from the Republic of Korea. (*Digital Chosun Ilbo*, 5 December 2005) The Republic of Korea itself (as we shall see) is a traditional source of outmigration which has become a major destination for migrant labour in recent years.

Malaysia and Thailand are of course also important examples of countries which are simultaneously major importers and exporters of people, with Malaysia being a major destination for migration from Indonesia, Bangladesh and the Philippines, and a major source of emigration to Singapore, and a smaller but nonetheless significant source of migration to Australia, the United States and Japan. In 2004, it was estimated that around 148,000 Thais were working overseas under official labour deployment schemes, though the total numbers (including undocumented Thai migrants) was in fact much higher. Meanwhile, 1.5 million immigrants from Cambodia, the Lao People's Democratic Republic and Myanmar (Burma) were living in Thailand (Huguet and Punpuing 2005: 3, 25).

### *2.2. Importance of undocumented migration*

In East Asia, as in other parts of the world, a large share of contemporary population movement takes the form of "illegal" or undocumented migration, including cross-border movements by asylum seekers, and by people who arrive on tourist visas and remain as workers in the host country.

Very many countries, including Japan and Malaysia, may indeed be said to operate “illegal migration policies”. In other words, in times of labour shortage the authorities have deliberately turned a blind eye to a certain level of undocumented migration, since this was seen as necessary for economic growth.

Japan’s post-war Migration Control Ordinance (which later, with minor revisions, became the Migration Control Law), for example, gave government officials great leeway in determining migration cases, including the power to deport anyone “determined by the Minister of Justice to be performing acts injurious to the interests and public order of the Japanese nation”. Conversely, the Minister of Justice was also empowered to overturn deportation orders, if he decided that there were “circumstances which make it appropriate for the Minister to grant special permission to stay” (Satō 1971: 285–95). Since the introduction of the law in 1951, tight limits on the acceptance of documented migrants have gone hand-in-hand with a tendency for officialdom to turn a blind eye to the presence of certain groups of “illegal” migrants, intermittently using this “special permission to stay” (*zairyû tokubetsu kyoka*) as a discretionary way of legalising their status when this suits the aims and interests of the state (Morris-Suzuki 2006).

The official number of “illegal” migrants in Japan peaked at close to 300,000 in the early 1990s. In 2003, following concerns about border security and rising press hysteria surrounding what is referred to as “foreigner crime”, the authorities launched a crack-down targeting illegal immigrants, which aimed to achieve a drastic reduction in their numbers. There is little sign, however, that this programme is on track. Overstayer numbers are still said to be around quarter of a million. Since no steps have been taken to replace the existing reliance on undocumented migrants with significant new frameworks allowing immigrants to enter and stay legally, it is hard to imagine how this crackdown will achieve much more than making the lives of undocumented foreign residents more insecure and anxious than ever.

The combination of reliance on undocumented migration and concerns about security has produced even more drastic results elsewhere. From the end of 2004 the Malaysian Government embarked on a major plan to reduce the number of undocumented migrants, whose presence had previously been tacitly accepted for economic reasons. A four-month amnesty was provided to allow migrants to return of their own accord, but thereafter compulsory expulsions of the remaining estimated 1.2 million undocumented migrants began. Ultimately, however, the impact of the expulsions on the labour market forced the government to allow some of those who had left under the amnesty to return on official permits (Adnan 2007: 4). This combination of reliance on undocumented labour with periodic crackdowns on “illegals” is symptomatic of the short-term and profoundly contradictory approach of nation-states to the issue of cross-border movement – a point to which I shall return later.

### 2.3. Weakening relationship of origin and ethnicity

The past three decades have witnessed a growing complexity in flows of migration, as well as a mere increase in numbers. For example, there has been a notable growth of secondary diasporas – that is, the re-migration of migrant communities to second or third destinations, one obvious example being the mass outmigration of Fijian Indians to other parts of the world. At the same time, there has also been a rapid rise in “return migrations”, or the return of second, third or even fourth generation emigrants to the places where their ancestors originated.

In Japan, for example, one response to labour shortage in the 1980s was the creation of a special loophole for descendants of pre-war Japanese emigrants who had settled in Latin America. These ethnic Japanese – *Nikkeijin* – were given special rights to obtain work permits and long-term residence permission. As a result, Brazilian nationals (nearly all of Japanese ancestry) came to constitute one of the largest groups of immigrants in Japan, their numbers reaching around 286,000 in 2004 (Kashiwazaki and Akaha 2006). Likewise, in the Republic of Korea a substantial proportion of the country’s rapidly growing number of migrants are descendants of Korean émigrés who left for China from the late nineteenth century to the end of the colonial period in 1945. The Republic of Korea had until the 1990s largely been a country of outmigration, but rapid economic growth brought with it new demands for labour, and by 2003 the number of foreign residents had risen to over 360,000, of whom about 280,000 were undocumented migrants (mostly visa overstayers) (Zheng 2003). Since then, new (and somewhat controversial) programmes have been put in place to encourage and persuade undocumented migrants to regularise their residence status, and plans have been drawn up to smooth the path for ethnic Koreans from China and the Russian Federation who wish to migrate to the Republic of Korea. As of 2005, however, about 70,000 out of the estimated 190,000 undocumented foreign residents in the Republic of Korea in 2005 were ethnic Koreans from China (*Joseonjok*) (Yeh 2006: 262).

Ethnic Koreans also make up a small but significant proportion of the “Chinese immigrants” entering Japan (Kwon et al. 2006). This is just one stream in an increasingly complex and cross-cutting pattern of migration, which is increasingly seeing migrants move not just between their home and a single host country, but also between different host countries within the East Asian region. Thus, for example, migrants from Bangladesh or Nepal may work first in the Republic of Korea before moving on to Japan, or vice versa. Muslim Rohingya refugees from Myanmar may spend years in Bangladesh before moving on to Malaysia. Filipino and Filipina migrants may spend periods of time working in various Southeast Asian countries, and may be part of family networks whose members are scattered between Malaysia, Singapore, Dubai, Canada and Western Europe.

This weakening of the association between the source of migration and the nationality or ethnicity of the migrant creates a need for sophisticated and well informed responses from states, who are too often inclined to rely on simplistic

assumptions about the ethnicity and culture, and thus also about the social and cultural needs, of immigrant populations. In an age of increasingly complex global population movements, these “multiple migrations” are likely to become more and more common, and need to be taken into account in framing understandings of and policies towards migration in the region.

#### *2.4. Local dimensions of international migration*

If it is important to be aware of cultural complexity of contemporary migration flows, it is also important to be conscious of their local dimensions. In the case of China, for example (as in many other contemporary cases), migration tends to take place along certain well-defined routes. A large share of Chinese migration to Japan, the United States and other parts of the Asia-Pacific region, comes from certain towns and villages in Fujian Province. Liang and Ye, who have studied the migration route between Fujian and New York, estimate that some 100,000 Fujianese had migrated to New York by 1994, and that the number has grown by around 10,000 per year since (Liang and Ye 2001: 190–91). On the other hand, most of the Chinese migrants to Far Eastern Russia (whose numbers are estimated at anywhere between 100,000 and 400,000) originate in the north-eastern provinces of China, where some inhabitants regularly cross the Russian border to buy and sell goods (Gelbras 2002).

Even more specific examples abound, one fascinating case of chain migration being that of the Indonesian community in the small Japanese town of Oarai, Ibaraki prefecture, which is a major centre for fish processing. The community, which has been researched by Indonesian scholar Riwanto Tirtosudarmo, are almost all Minahasans from Sulawesi, who have come to Oarai through connections forged by family members and neighbours (Tirtosudarmo 2004). Once again, policies aimed at accommodating the social and cultural needs of migrants need to be sensitive to these local connections, rather than simply perceiving migrants in terms of broad national categories.

#### *2.5. Likelihood of future large-scale migration flows*

Economic and political developments in the region, including social and economic transformations in China and political changes on the Korean Peninsula (whatever form these changes take) seem almost certain to increase the level of international migration in the coming ten to twenty years.

One major potential issue for our region is the movement of people out of the Democratic People’s Republic of Korea. The number of North Korean emigrants already living in north-eastern China is unknown. Some sources put the figure as high as 300,000, but the figures most widely accepted by experts appear to be between 50,000 and 100,000 (Lee 2001). As in the case of China, so also in the case of DPR Korea it is important to emphasise that emigration originates mainly from specific regions of the country: particularly the impoverished North

Hamgyeong Province which borders the Chinese autonomous prefecture of Yanbian (home to the largest share of China's ethnic Korean minority).

Thousands of emigrants from DPR Korea (now officially referred to as *saeteomin* or "new residents") have been resettled in the Republic of Korea: 6,596 arrived between 2000 and 2005 alone (mostly via China and other third countries) (Ministry of Unification, Rep. Korea 2006). Others have sought asylum elsewhere in the region and beyond (including the United States and Australia). In recent years, Viet Nam, Thailand, Lao PDR and Mongolia have become significant "staging posts" through which emigrants from DPR Korea travel on their journeys out of China, in the hope of reaching Rep. Korea or other destinations.

A complex issue of "return migration" also affects the North Korean refugee situation. Between 1959 and 1984, some 90,000 ethnic Koreans migrated from Japan to DPR Korea. Almost all of them in fact originated in the southern half of the Korean peninsula, and many had been born and brought up in Japan, though some identified themselves politically with the communist regime in DPR Korea. (Their number also included over 6,000 Japanese citizens: mostly Japanese women married to Korean men.) The migration was officially supposed to be a voluntary and humanitarian repatriation, supervised by the international Red Cross. However, as recently declassified documents show, covert and quite deliberate pressure was placed on Koreans in Japan to encourage them to "return" (Morris-Suzuki 2007).

These migrants from Japan experienced hardship and often persecution in DPR Korea, and are disproportionately represented amongst the many tens of thousands of refugees who have crossed the border from Korea into China in the past fifteen years. As of mid-2007, about 140 (including a number of Japanese citizens) had been allowed to resettle in Japan (*Yomiuri Shinbun* (Tokyo) 12 June 2007). However, Japan has no clearly defined policy towards refugees from DPR Korea. If the North Korean political system were to collapse altogether and very large migrant outflows occurred, will these ethnic Koreans seek to return to Japan, and will Japan be willing to take them back?

By contrast with the situation in China, which refuses to grant North Korean emigrants asylum, popular discourse in the United States and other Western countries tends to treat all those leaving DPR Korea as political refugees fleeing an oppressive regime. In fact, however, all the evidence suggests that the nature of migratory flows out of DPR Korea is complex. While some of those crossing the border are certainly fleeing political persecution, a substantial number are people engaged in small-scale trade by which they hope to feed their families in the face of the extreme food shortages affecting DPR Korea's northern rural regions.

Other potential major sources of refugee flows in the region include Sri Lanka, where renewed internal conflict has left some 200,000 people internally displaced, and the ongoing situation in Myanmar (Burma). Some 140,000 Burmese refugees still live in Thai refugee camps in situations of great vulnerability, while the United

Nations High Commissioner for Refugees (UNHCR) estimated that by the end of 2006 some 130,000 refugees and stateless people (many of them Muslim Rohingyas from Myanmar or Moros from the Philippines) would be living in Malaysia (Adnan 2007). Many of these people, like a growing number of North Koreans in China, are long-term displaced people who have lived outside their place of birth and without official residence status for years (if not decades).

### 3. Challenges to International Migration and Refugee Regimes

The five issues outlined here highlight the need for a far-reaching rethinking of fundamental approaches to migration in our region. However, cross-border migration is self-evidently an international issue, and cannot be dealt with in the framework of national policies alone. It is for this reason that, in the mid-twentieth century, new international treaties and organisations were created to confront some of the most pressing humanitarian problems created through large-scale international movements of people. These international systems were created in the context of the Cold War, and they have had considerable difficulty in responding to some of the new challenges which have emerged in the so-called “post-Cold War” era.

The Geneva Convention relating to the Status of Refugees,<sup>2</sup> established in 1951, originally applied almost exclusively to Europe, and provided protection only to those displaced by events occurring before the beginning of 1951. In other words, it aimed to deal with the consequences of the Second World War and the emerging Cold War in Europe. Even though it was subsequently revised to cover events occurring in other times and places, this context has fundamentally shaped the approach of the Convention to refugee issues. (Neumann 2004: 80–85). In the political and economic circumstances of Cold War Europe, it was (at least from an official point of view) relatively easy to draw a clear line between refugees and other so-called “migrant workers” or *gastarbeiter*. Refugees arriving in Western Europe and North America were mostly Eastern European and often from middle-class backgrounds, while “migrant labourers” were largely working-class and came from Southern Europe or former colonies in Asia, Africa and elsewhere.

Since the break-up of the Soviet Union, however, the binary confrontation between communist and capitalist worlds has been replaced by a more complex multiplicity of conflicts, often occurring within (rather than between) nation-states, and often taking place in the poorer nations of the world. These have generated large flows of migrants fleeing a combination of political, social and economic sufferings: civil war, genocide, human rights abuses by military or police, famine, economic disruption, unemployment and poverty. Many individual migrants cross borders to escape a combination of several of these circumstances, and it becomes very difficult to determine whether their main reason for migration is “economic” or

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<sup>2</sup> [http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/o\\_c\\_ref.htm](http://www.unhcr.ch/html/menu3/b/o_c_ref.htm)

“political”. Moreover, the Geneva Convention does not extend protection to refugees fleeing civil war, however genuine their need for protection may be.

As many experts acknowledge, the changed circumstances of the twenty-first century world require a rethinking of the definition of “refugee”, and of the best ways of offering international protection to those who cross borders in search of a safe future for themselves and their families. At the same time, however, populist politicians increasingly play on public fears of an influx of “queue jumpers” or “bogus refugees”. The heated media rhetoric which surrounds the refugee issue in many parts of the world today tends to reinforce the misleading notion that there is a clear and simple line between good “genuine” refugees and bad “illegal migrants” who masquerade as refugees to pursue their own economic self-interest. In many cases, however, things are much more complicated than this. The line between people who flee a war torn country with a “justified fear of persecution” and the people who flee the same country in the desperate hope of obtaining a roof over their heads and an education for their children can be very fine indeed. Rather than addressing this genuine dilemma with imagination, perception and understanding, however, all too many governments are using it as an occasion for raising the barricades against the entry of migrants, in the process sometimes grotesquely compounding the sufferings of people who are attempting to escape the trauma of war, civil strife, imprisonment or torture.

In recent years, the UNHCR has tried to address some of these far-reaching problems. As the fiftieth anniversary of the Geneva Convention approached, there was much debate about the possibility of a fundamental revision of the international refugees recognition system, and the UNHCR launched a series of global consultations on the protection of refugees to “explore how best to revitalise the existing protection regime while ensuring its flexibility to address new problems” (Lubbers 2003: 5). However, because the anniversary coincided with the rise of nationalistic and xenophobic movements in many of the richer and more powerful countries of the world, there were fears that any attempt at a major revision of the Convention would simply provide scope for nations such as Australia, the United Kingdom, the United States, etc. to weaken the already limited powers of the Convention and the UNHCR. As a result, in the end the main initiative taken was the drawing up of a rather generally worded “Agenda for Protection”. This addresses some important issues arising from cross-border population flows in the twenty-first century, including the need to “protect refugees within broader migration movements”. As the Agenda points out, problems of asylum and problems of wider migration policies are inseparably related because “the insufficiency of viable, legal migration options is an added incentive for persons who are not refugees to enter countries through the asylum channel” (UNHCR 2003: 46).

Effective refugee protection must therefore go hand-in-hand with policies which provide reasonable possibilities for other forms of cross-border movement for people who, for a wide variety of reasons, need or want to seek new futures for



themselves and their families in other nations. Though the Agenda raised important issues, its recommendations remained at a fairly abstract level, and were in any case only “guides to the action” of states, rather than to imposing binding treaty obligations upon them.

Another important initiative supported by the UNHCR and the International Organization for Migration (an intergovernmental body that deals with wider issues of international population movement) has been the development of regional collaboration on refugee and migration issues. In 1996, the two bodies supported the creation of the Asia-Pacific Consultations, described as “a process (and not an institution) aimed at promoting dialogue and exploring opportunities for greater regional cooperation on matters relating to population movements, including refugees, displaced persons and migrants”.<sup>3</sup> These dialogues between the governments of the region have become an important focus of the work of the UNHCR in Asia. However, their effectiveness has been limited precisely by the fact that they are intergovernmental dialogues, being held at a time when many governments of the region (Australia being a conspicuous example) are almost obsessively focused on the problem of how to keep out “boatpeople” and other “unauthorised arrivals”.

The problems of intergovernmental regional cooperation on migration and border issues become very clear if we look at the large number of bilateral agreements about the issue which have been concluded in our region in the past few years. Particularly since the events of 11 September 2001, national governments around the world have developed policies to cooperate with their regional neighbours in border protection. For example, in the “Japan-Australia Creative Partnership” declaration signed on 1 May 2002, on the occasion of Prime Minister Koizumi’s visit to Australia, one of the key issues on the agenda was collaboration between Australia and Japan in strengthening border controls and preventing people smuggling in our region.<sup>4</sup> The Joint Statement on the prevention of terrorism signed by Howard and Koizumi in Tokyo on 16 July 2003 also highlights immigration and border controls, including “support for the implementation of Advance Passenger Information (API) systems” as one of the key areas of collaboration between Australia and Japan.<sup>5</sup>

A similar emphasis can be seen in government-to-government contacts between Australia and other countries of the region. For example, during his visit to Malaysia in 2003, then Attorney-General Darryl Williams had intensive discussions with his counterparts on anti-terrorism and border control, and offered assistance for the development of Malaysia’s new South-East Asian Regional

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<sup>3</sup> UNHCR eCentre website (<http://www.the-ecentre.net/directory/collaborating/6-2-5.cfm>); see also website of the Asia-Pacific Consultations (<http://www.apcprocess.net>).

<sup>4</sup> See “Joint Statement with Prime Minister Koizumi: Australia-Japan Creative Partnership” in Department of Foreign Affairs and Trade, Japan Country Brief ([http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/japan/japan\\_brief\\_bilateral.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/geo/japan/japan_brief_bilateral.html)).

<sup>5</sup> “Australia-Japan Joint Statement on Cooperation to Combat International Terrorism”, in *ibid*.

Centre for Counter-terrorism, including “training assistance in relation to border control, critical infrastructure protection and security awareness-raising”. Similar offers of assistance have been made to support the Philippines’ border control and maritime security, and were also incorporated into the recent Australia-Indonesia agreement on security cooperation, signed earlier this month.

The great majority of these agreements, in other words, have concerned ways of ensuring tighter scrutiny of migrants and increasing powers to exclude the “undesirable”. There has been a very noticeable lack of serious regional cooperation on questions of protecting the rights and welfare of migrants (including refugees), or on considering how the countries of the region might cooperate if faced by a sudden refugee crisis, of the sort that might be triggered by events on the Korean Peninsula, or by other political crises, wars or natural disasters in the region.

#### **4. Need for New Forms of Regional Collaboration**

All of these considerations point to the need for new forms of regional collaboration to address present and future migration issues. Flows of people have the potential to weave the societies of the region together, enriching East Asia through the energy, knowledge and skills which migrants bring with them, and through the exchanges of ideas which migration promotes. If this is to happen, though, the governments and people of the region will need to respond to the challenges of migration with creativity and imagination, and invent new political frameworks to address the complex human issues raised by every large-scale movement of people. Governments have proved extraordinarily inventive in creating new concepts and institutions to exclude “undesirable aliens”.<sup>6</sup> Can they now show equal creativity in humanising border controls – through legal migrant labour programmes, through family reunion schemes and provisions for dual nationality, through political rights for foreign denizens, and even through rethinking the very meaning of the word “foreign”?

The Northeast Asia of the twenty-first century is a space that will be crossed by old and new flows of migration linking the Indian subcontinent, Southeast Asia, Australia, China, Korea North and South, Taiwan, Japan and Russia in many directions. The only uncertainty is whether they will be met with fear and hostility and repression or with imagination, understanding and hope. Already thousands of migrants from Southeast Asia, South Asia, the former Soviet Union and elsewhere live and work in Japan and the Republic of Korea. That these flows will occur is certain. The flows, besides, will not only link the nations of the region together, but

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<sup>6</sup> One recent case of such inventiveness was the Australian Government’s decision, enacted almost overnight and with very little public discussion, to redefine the entire national territory of Australia by introducing a new concept known as a “migration zone”. This concept, previously unknown to political theory, made it possible for the government to remove parts of the national territory from Australia’s “migration zone”, so that potential refugees who arrived on these parts of the national territory would no longer be able to claim political asylum from the government.

also open it to the outside world. They and their descendants, too, will become part of those human networks which link the countries of the region, and the region to the world.

To illustrate the changing face of East Asia, I should like to quote a song entitled *Huimang* ("hope" in Korean), because its words echo themes which appear again and again in the stories of those who crossed borders in the twentieth century, and who still cross them today. The song, composed and sung by Eureka, a group of migrants from Myanmar who live and work in Bucheon, Gimpo, Bupyeong, Pocheon and Ansan (Republic of Korea), comes from their first CD. The cover notes state: "even though it has been several years since its first organisation, the band did not have opportunity to compose their own songs due to their unstable positions in Korea as migrant workers: some of the members have returned to their countries or to other countries. The production of the CD gave them the opportunity to make their own songs." What new songs will be created through the movements of people in twenty-first century Northeast Asia, and what forgotten songs will be re-remembered?

Will the future be what I long for?  
Will the future be what I wish to see?  
Though I have left my family, let the hope live.  
Our tear drops will someday be like a river,  
Someday I hope our lives will shine.<sup>7</sup>

Throughout East Asia, there are many NGOs, migrants' organisations, human rights groups and others which are trying to combat the dark vision of migration as "security threat", and to protect the sense of hope and possibility which migratory movements have always contained, even though the hope has often been mixed with suffering. Cross-border collaboration amongst such groups, and between NGO's academic researchers, legal experts, central and local government organisations, etc., could make a real contribution to regional integration by exchanging ideas and putting forward practical plans to enhance the rights, security and welfare of migrants and to prepare for possible large-scale future population flows. Such collaboration does not need to wait for the creation of formal regional community mechanisms. It can begin today.

A possible model for such collaboration might be the creation of a regional forum on migration issues linking various East Asian nations. I should like to conclude by suggesting several approaches which I believe to be of central importance in developing such a forum:

1. Collaboration should be multi-layered, involving representatives both of government and non-government organisations, and drawing on expertise from a wide range of walks of life.

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<sup>7</sup> *Huimang*, composed and performed by Eureka on the CD *What is Life*, produced by Kyongju Park for the Migrant Workers' Music Project, 2002.

2. The object should be to engage representatives from migrant-sending and migrant-receiving countries and regions in constructive dialogue, mutual learning and the production of creative ideas to address problems of migration and migrants' rights in the region.
3. Given the nature of regional migration flows (discussed in the early part of this paper) it is particularly important to involve representatives of local governments and local organisations from the main migrant-sending and migrant-receiving cities or districts in the collaborative process.
4. The forum should provide an opportunity for representatives of migrant communities themselves, including those who have experience of life as refugees, as undocumented migrants and as detainees in migrant detention centres, to contribute to the debate on the future of regional migration policies.
5. The forum should aim to supplement the work of groups like the UNHRC, producing workable proposals to be put to local and national governments and international organisations in the East Asia region.
6. Wide dissemination of the forum's deliberations through the internet and other media should be used to promote greater understanding of migration issues throughout the region.

This proposal, of course, leaves many large questions unanswered. Most importantly, perhaps, I have not attempted to provide any clear geographical definition to the concept of "East Asia". In practice, it seems likely that this type of "bottom-up" regional collaboration can most effectively be developed by starting small – with cooperation spanning a limited number of nations and localities – and gradually expanding outward in response to perceived needs. The important task, however, is surely to begin debate and network building as soon as possible. Today, powerful nations seem to find it ever easier to ignore the conventions created in the twentieth century to protect human rights, while intergovernmental cooperation in our region is increasingly focused on the surveillance and exclusion of "undesirable" migrants. New forms of regional collaboration around migration issues are urgently needed, and might provide an important impetus to the wider development of cooperation between the nations and societies of East Asia.

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### About the Author

Tessa Morris-Suzuki is professor of Japanese history and convenor of the Division of Pacific and Asian History in the College of Asia and the Pacific, Australian National University. She also convenes the Asia Civic Rights Network, and co-edits its online journal *AsiaRights*. Her research addresses subjects including frontiers and migration in East Asia; the history of the indigenous Ainu people of Japan; representations of history in popular media; and the social history of technology in Japan. Publications include *Re-inventing Japan: Time, Space, Nation* (M. E. Sharpe 1998), *The Past Within Us: Media, Memory, History* (Verso 2005), and *Exodus to North Korea: Shadows from Japan's Cold War* (Rowman & Littlefield 2007). Email: tessa.morris-suzuki@anu.edu.au

# **The Contested Basis of Nationhood: Key Issues when Analysing Labour Flows in Southeast Asia**

MICHAEL LEIGH\*  
*University of Melbourne*

*While many of the broader discussions of globalisation and regionalisation convey an air of inevitability, most neither advocate nor address the vexed issues raised by the free flow of people. There are various interrelated elements that help to explain the unwillingness to even broach this issue, the key one being the very basis of nationhood, governance and how representative institutions have been structured within the geographical boundaries of the nation-state. This paper tentatively explores the relationships between globalisation/regional integration, nationhood and the different sources of sovereignty and legitimacy. Specifically, I consider the role of labour flows, and how these constrain the process of regional integration.*

Globalisation has been argued principally in terms of the open flow of capital, of information and of goods, the breaking down of national barriers and the institution of global markets. The rhetoric is largely about the benefits to global standards of living. There is a broad popular and academic literature on the subject. Some proponents are positively evangelical, reminding one of the nineteenth-century exponents of the high noon of colonialism. Others weigh up the overall benefits of freer trade, and measure the balance of outcomes in terms of globally enhanced standards of living, of how the rising tide of economic activity will raise all the boats in the sea. Critics will have none of this, many substitute the term “Americanisation” for globalisation, and point to the obvious cases of severe local dislocation that have resulted from removal of trade barriers. There are very real debates about widespread benefits derived from significantly lower costs of clothing and processed goods, at the expense of clearly identifiable plant closures and local disruption.

Global centres of power have been the driving forces behind the processes of globalisation, and markets for certain products (principally agricultural) have been heavily distorted by Europe, Japan and the United States to the gross detriment of poorer populations, who thus experience the raw end of the globalisation process. One counter argument is that those who gain employment in the textile factories of

say, Cambodia, have freely chosen that employment over remaining low paid agricultural labourers.

The proponents of market forces lionise all of the other transnational flows, but advocating free flows of labour raises many issues.

## **1. Labour Flows**

Despite anecdotal impressions, there are good grounds to suggest that earlier periods of human history witnessed much larger proportionate flows of population than are evident at the commencement of the twenty-first century. Within colonial empires there would often be fairly open migration. The deglobalisation implosion began around 1914, and continued through two world wars, the great depression and the Cold War (Williamson 1998: 51). Now there is reconstruction of the pre-First World War global economy, but without comparable labour flows, except between Mexico and the United States.

## **2. Nationhood**

The nation-state is very much alive and well when it comes to regulating and controlling the flow of labour and of people. All other global and transnational enterprises are irresponsible; they are accountable to no specific constituency, certainly not one defined in terms of democratic discourse. In the absence of accountability mechanisms, rule is wielded by the most powerful nations, armed security instruments and those with the most economic clout. In this context we can readily revert to views that are quite Darwinian, the survival of the fittest.

It is only within the sovereign nation-state that democratic responsibility is derived from its citizens, and that is where the linkage lies between labour flows and democratic governance. As democracy was extended, restrictions on the flow of migrants were tightened, as the boundaries of the national constituency had to be established, maintained and, indeed, reified. For example, the white Australia policy historically derived from an urge to extend democracy and end indentured labour. The entrenchment of democratic formats coincided with increased restrictions on immigration. The doors to the “new world” were closed before 1930: abruptly by Brazil (1921), the United States (1917), and by a steady drift in Argentina (Williamson 1998: 51). In some cases, such as Canada, the closure was through a withdrawal of immigrant subsidies.

The very term “democracy” comes from Greece. The *demos* were a slave-owning civilisation where participation was the prerogative of a small group of privileged males. For a nation-based democracy we then face the question of how and where the boundaries of the polity are drawn, and thus who is deemed to be a citizen, and who is entitled to be part of the franchise. That is critical to the functioning of



nation-based democracy. There are many approaches employed to determine who is entitled to be part of the franchise:

- One concept is the territorial view of *demos*, the people – i.e. those adults who reside within a given territory. What age is an adult? That definition varies considerably between nations, and marriage can also confer adulthood in some.
- Another has to do with birth; that a citizen is a person who has rights by virtue of birth in a territorially defined unit. But what of the children of temporary residents?
- Earlier concepts of franchise were often based on property, as applied in the Australian state of Victoria's Legislative Council (or parliamentary upper house) until the 1950s. That view sees franchise as based on those who have a tangible stake in the society, as measured by their physical assets.
- Indigenous rights can be a basis for determining or modifying the franchise. There is an influential school of thought that the historical date of arrival in a territory confers certain rights and privileges that take precedence over later-arriving residents, and certainly over sojourners, be they migrants or contract workers.
- Other defining characteristics for the franchise include race or religion. The debates in Fiji, Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam are about racial and religious criteria for selection of and participation in rulership. Brunei bases its citizenship on an amalgam of race, religion and monarchy (Melayu Islam Beraja). Birth location, and history of residence, is of little significance in Brunei Darussalam.
- A clear religious criterion is assumed by those who advocate the adoption of a variant of the Islamic State, in which non-believers have the status of honoured guests. The organisation dubbed *Jemaah Islamiah* (JI) in Southeast Asia is said to advocate creation of a nation (or caliphate) based on religious criteria, straddling the territory of Indonesia, Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei and parts of the Philippines and Thailand.

The nation-state remains the central reference point for human beings, as an “imagined community”, an entity that people are exhorted and trained to die for. The nation rather than the international community has been assertively defined by the United States as the basic unit above which no loyalty can be given. During the cold war the western alliance advocated shared values of freedom and democracy. However, now the fracture line over globalisation is between the United States and the rest of the world. The disagreement is not over the principles of liberal democracy but over where the ultimate source of liberal democratic legitimacy lies, especially within broader Western civilisation. Fukuyama (2002) argues that

Europeans regard the violent history of the first half of the 20th century as the direct outcome of the unbridled exercise of national sovereignty. The EU House

that they have been building for themselves since the 1950s was deliberately intended to embed those sovereignties in multiple layers of rules, norms and regulations to prevent those sovereignties from ever spinning out of control again.

Americans tend not to see any source of democratic legitimacy higher than the constitutional democratic nation-state. To the extent that any international organisation has legitimacy, it is because duly constituted democratic majorities have handed that legitimacy up to them in a negotiated, contractual process. The contracting parties can withdraw such legitimacy at any time; international law and organisation have no existence independent of this type of voluntary agreement between sovereign nation-states.

Europeans, by contrast, tend to believe that democratic legitimacy flows from the will of an international community much larger than any individual nation-state.

It is in this context that European multilateralism is at odds with the Bush administration's withdrawal from the Kyoto Protocol and Anti-Ballistic Missile Treaty, its opposition to the ban on landmines, its extra-territorial treatment of non-US prisoners at Guantanamo Bay, and its opposition to the International Criminal Court, to even the thought that it might be conceivably possible for any US citizens to be held to account for war crimes by an international body, no matter that the issue involves serious human rights violations. The highest judicial and legislative authority for Americans cannot be considered to be above that residing in Washington.

As was evident in the Australian boat people debates, assertion of national boundaries remains highly salient and drawing a line against "the others" is fairly effective populist politics. We know well how extremist political figures have sown hatred both against minorities within national boundaries and against threatening outsiders as a very cheap means of gaining popular support. Examples abound in Bosnia and the former Yugoslavia. Since 9/11 the very same question has been echoed in the United States and Palestine – "why do *they* hate us so much?"

It is in this context that we might consider the work of the Harvard economist Edward Glaeser who contends that the free market for hate is amenable to economic analysis, to the laws of supply and demand. In the market one can lower the demand for hate by significantly raising the cost of hating (Glaeser 2002). This can be done through positive interactions between separate groups or societies. Hatred requires caricatures of the hated, so social interactions make hating more costly and harder to sustain.<sup>1</sup> Using the words of non-economists, that can be viewed as expanding the space of discourse. Recent studies of Australia indicate that social capital has dissipated in suburbs with linguistically divided populations (Leigh 2006).

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<sup>1</sup> The counter-intuitive advice to Australians would be to avoid publicly confronting the "fundamentalists", the "haters", those who you oppose. Instead engage the issues, support political discourse, and the rights of those with whom you disagree to use every means other than violence. American public embrace of the "moderate" Iranians could be seen to have doomed them domestically in the context of US Government refusal to dialogue with their popularly elected President Ahmadi-Nejad.

The proposition is that regional integration is dependent on establishment and maintenance of tight national control, especially over the transnational flow of labour, i.e. people. That goes back to questions of the primacy of the national project, and the frequent use of conflict, caricature and hatred to reinforce that project. That is boundary maintenance through the use of hate, of fear of “the other”.

### 3. Southeast Asia

Southeast Asia presently has major movements of global workers, especially Indonesians, Filipinos and Burmese. Such movements are not new phenomena at all; the proportionate flows were much greater during the colonial era than they are in recent times. Maybe that was not globalisation, but certainly it was integration within economic and political empires whose centres of power were unmistakably European and latterly North American. These labour flows complemented and facilitated the massive flows of capital, goods, drugs, arms, information and ideas.<sup>2</sup> The flows were highly differentiated, and hierarchical. Some flows were one-way and heavily controlled, some were open and encouraged, others were state-sponsored and covert, still others private and proscribed. What is particularly interesting is to examine the relationship between different types of flows, to examine the confluence and contradictions.

If one looks just at the flows of people and of ideas, we see puzzles and assertions:

- Chinese migrants to Southeast Asia brought skills but not high civilisation (Alisjabana).
- The Islam brought to Southeast Asia by the early Indian traders was indigenised, in contrast to the more exclusivist/fundamentalist Islam conveyed by respected religious teachers.
- The massive flow of Indonesians to Malaysia has not been accompanied by a flow of ideas impacting on Malaysian society, as has been evident by Malaysian Government negative caricatures of *reformasi* in Indonesia.
- The Islamisation of middle classes in Indonesia and Malaysia is impacting concurrently with a very strong middle-class “MTV” popular culture, both belief systems transcending national boundaries, and carried by a range of new technologies.

The reason for certain ideas being accepted, and others just disappearing without leaving a mark, probably has a lot to do with the status and stature of those who carry the ideas, their prestige and power in society, and the extent to which they operate in an enclave.

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<sup>2</sup> In recent years there has been a number of bilateral and multilateral initiatives to cooperate on people-smuggling, trafficking and undocumented migration in Asia. One of the more important of these was the “Bali Process”, convened by the foreign ministers of Indonesia and Australia in Bali, February 2002 and April 2003 (Hugo 2006: 146).

#### 4. Malaysia

The Malaysian case has been spotlighted, especially with the introduction of tight controls on 1 August 2002 and the imposition of penalties that include beating and imprisonment, not just of illegal migrant workers, but also of their employers.<sup>3</sup> Following complaints of abuses of domestic workers, the Malaysian Government now blacklists employers who mistreat domestic workers, with a lifetime ban on employers who physically abuse domestic workers (Kaur 2007a: 13). In May 2006 Malaysia and Indonesia signed a Memorandum of Understanding which set out a standard contract for Indonesian domestic workers in Malaysia (Kaur 2007a: 14). In July 2005, the Malaysian Home Ministry established a one-stop centre to reduce the processing period from a couple of weeks to one day, with a new streamlined administrative process involving people from different ministries. In August 2005 the responsibility for collecting levies changed from the Immigration Department to the Home Ministry.

The Malaysian Government was greatly concerned by the sheer scale of new arrivals, legal and illegal. A memorandum was signed between Indonesia and Malaysia in 2004 on the recruitment and placement of Indonesian migrant workers (Kaur 2007a: 17, fn 20). Immigrant labour continued to increase from 500,000 in 1984 to more than 1.2 million in 1991, and to over 2.4 million in the early 1998 (Abdul-Aziz 2001: 3). These figures should include both the legal and registered workers as well as the estimated undocumented workers.<sup>4</sup> By 2007 the estimate of foreign workers was 2.5 million, although some NGOs have placed the estimate at about 3 million people, of which more than half come from Indonesia (Tempo 2007: 16). Migrant labour contributes more than 20 per cent of the total workforce in Malaysia. It is estimated that there are currently between 800,000 to 1 million

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<sup>3</sup> Effective from 1 August 2002, any employer caught employing more than five illegal immigrants is liable to face mandatory whipping and a maximum five-year imprisonment under the amendment of Section 39 (B) under the Immigration Regulation Act 1963. (An employer who employs less than five illegal immigrants is liable to fines of between RM10,000–50,000 and one year's imprisonment).

At the same time, under amendment of Section 15 (4) under the Immigration Regulation Act 1956–63, any foreign worker who overstays in Malaysia is liable to a maximum five-year imprisonment and/or a RM10,000 fine and a mandatory whipping (not exceeding six strokes). To date whipping sentences have been applied mainly to foreign workers, and rarely to Malaysian employers.

An amnesty programme was conducted in mid-2002 to allow foreign workers to return home before the amended Immigration Act came into force, of which it is estimated that 400,000 people took advantage (Abdullah 2002; Kanapathy 2006). The next amnesty was from 29 October 2004 to 28 February 2005. The initial four months was extended for Indonesians because of the earthquake and tsunami on 26 December 2004, and the authorities also took a softer approach in the aftermath of the tsunami (Kanapathy 2006: 9–10).

<sup>4</sup> The number of legal foreign workers for the whole of Malaysia totalled 732,588 in 2000 and 810,695 in 2001 (Malaysia, Ministry of Finance 2001). According to the Statistics Department, legal migrant workers made up only 8 per cent of the total workforce of 9,077,100 in Malaysia in 2000 (Malaysia, Department of Statistics [Sarawak Branch] 2000). This number is a gross underestimate when we consider the number of foreign workers for 1998 cited by Abdul-Aziz (2001). In the domestic worker category alone, Malaysia recruits 60,000 Indonesian domestic workers annually and more than 90 per cent of the 240,000 domestic workers in Malaysia are Indonesian (Kaur 2007a: 5).

undocumented migrants in Malaysia, with about 150,000 of these being refugee and asylum seekers (Kaur 2007b: 81).<sup>5</sup>

The whole of Malaysia has become heavily reliant on migrant labour for the following three major industries: plantations, construction and domestic helpers. Amarjit Kaur (2007a: 11; 2007b: 80) identifies four phases of Malaysian immigration policy since the 1970s: 1970–80 – a liberal policy; 1981–88 legalisation of foreign labour recruitment and signing of bilateral agreements; 1989–96 legalisation programme to halt increase of illegal migrants, followed in 1989 by a freezing of foreign labour. The fourth phase, from 1997, involved measures to control unauthorised migration, with an amnesty followed by work-permits and new legislation. These measures were designed to reduce dependence on a single racial group.

Sabah's immigrant infiltration is more severe, particularly of illegal immigrants from the Philippines. This includes not only those who come to seek job opportunities, but those who have sought refuge from unrest in Philippines and Indonesia. Between 1972 and 1976, Sabah received a massive influx of refugees from the southern Philippines, who gained local residence. These were refugees from the Moro insurgency. At the time the United Nations High Commissioner for Refugees estimated their number to be about 72,000.<sup>6</sup>

The subsequent huge influx of immigrants to Sabah has dramatically increased the size of the population in Sabah. The total number of immigrants is now estimated to be more than one-third of the total population of the state, a population that has shown an officially recorded compound rate of growth of 6 per cent per annum for the past decade. Newspaper reports cited estimates of 100,000–150,000 illegal immigrants among 600,000 immigrants in Sabah (*Malaysia Today*, 2 April 2002). However, Tomiyuki (2000) cited estimates of non-Malaysian citizens to be approximately 823,000 out of a 1998 mid-year population estimate of 2,812,900. Either these figures are unrealistically high, or not all of these migrants were in the workforce. Given that the total number of employed persons in Sabah in 1998 was

<sup>5</sup> Kanapathy (2006: 4) quotes figures for *registered* migrant workers at 847,000 in 2002; 1.1 million in 2003 and 1.9 million in 2005. Official estimates of irregular migrants are 0.7 million, of which 70 per cent are believed to be Indonesian. Of these, most enter the country illegally, while some overstay their visas (Kanapathy 2006: 5). Many countries have similar problems. The UK Government, for example, “seems to have little idea how many immigrants are in the country. It has just had to admit that the number of foreign-born workers who had arrived since 1997 was 1.5 m” (Wolf 2007).

<sup>6</sup> *Daily Express*, 30 June 1981, cited in Tomiyuki (2000). The Malaysian Government sought UNHCR assistance with Filipino Muslim refugees who fled to Sabah in the 1970s and 1980s, but there was never a formal agreement. By 2007, however, the government was feeling hampered by the UNHCR, with the Home Affairs Minister stating that it “gets in the way” of Malaysian enforcement agencies (Kaur 2007b: 83).

1,105,300 (Malaysia Department of Statistics 2000), if all the migrants were in the workforce, they would account for 74 per cent of the total workforce.<sup>7</sup>

In Sarawak, the estimates of immigrants were substantially less. The total number of foreign workers employed in 1991 was 10,838<sup>8</sup> while by 2002 the estimate was 90,000 foreign workers (*Malaysia Today*, 4 April 2002). This estimate is rather conservative as, according to statistics from the Labour Department of Sarawak, a total of 100,894 immigrant workers were employed in the year 2001. Officials of that department advise that their figures significantly under-report the number of Indonesian workers.<sup>9</sup>

Correct estimates of migrant labourers are naturally difficult to attain, especially given the clandestine nature of much movement, especially of migration over land and sea boundaries that are wide open.

Historically, Malaysia has been one of the world's most open economies, its trade to GDP ratio is over 200 per cent.<sup>10</sup> The flow of imported labour underpinned "modern" economic development of colonial Malaya, providing cheap labour to exploit tin and rubber and to establish the infrastructure of the west coast of the Peninsula. Over 40 per cent of Malaysia's cultivated land is already devoted to palm-oil plantations, and millions of hectares are being cleared and planted in the Borneo states. Commercial success is predicated on the availability of cheap migrant labour.

## 5. The Basis of Nationhood

In the Malaysian case, the contestation that took place in 1945–48 was very much about the role of migrant labour as equal citizens in their new abode.<sup>11</sup> The issue was decided when the Malayan Union was abandoned in favour of a new national entity called the Federation of Malay Land ("Federation of Malaya" was a deliberate mistranslation. The Malay language term *Persekutuan Tanah Melayu* made unambiguously clear the nature of citizenship, of prior rights in this "Malay Land").

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<sup>7</sup> The estimate for 1991 was 425,175 out of a total population of 1,734,685 (Tomiyuki 2000). Out of 425,175 in 1991, 53.4 per cent were Indonesians and 44.5 per cent Filipinos.

<sup>8</sup> Estimate by Department of Statistics, Malaysia.

<sup>9</sup> Interview with senior official, Kuching, 1 November 2007.

<sup>10</sup> Keynote address by the Minister of International Trade and Industry, YB Dato' Seri Rafidah Aziz, 6 June 2002, to the Seminar on Business Opportunities in Malaysia, San Diego, California ([www.miti.gov.my/static.epub](http://www.miti.gov.my/static.epub)).

<sup>11</sup> At the root of the immigrant-indigenous split is the matter of legitimacy: does the historical fact of prior residence carry with it certain rights and privileges not open to later-arriving residents? This, in turn, arouses the questions of loyalty, stability, priorities, all of which come to the surface continually in the debates over the ultimate quality of the new Malaysian community and in deliberations over the most suitable steps to be taken to achieve such a community (Enloe 1970: 14).

The political compromises that led to the independence, first of the Malayan states, and subsequently of the political entity called Malaysia, had to do with rights and prior rights of the indigenous peoples, and the contestation between concepts of one person one vote (*jus soli*) and the primacy of indigenous peoples, in this case the Malays.<sup>12</sup> Political discourse has focused on race and ethnicity, and that discourse has been employed for specific purposes such as the integration of Sabah and Sarawak into Malaysia.

With Malays over time becoming a clear majority of the electorate, only then did former Prime Minister Mahathir publicly focus on the concept of a Malaysian “race”, as distinct from Malay, Chinese, Dayak and Indian “races”. The Malay term *bangsa* can be translated as race or as nation, depending on the context.<sup>13</sup> That confusion (deliberate or not) is quite critical to comprehending Malaysia, as there is a highly selective use of this particular term. Entrenched constitutional provisions forbid the questioning of racially defined rights. “Abuse” of those provisions can lead to charges of sedition, and prosecution is frequently threatened against opposition political figures whose political discourse trespasses the officially sanctioned limits to debate. The basis of nationhood has been contested by the reality that the forebears of almost half the population arrived in the territories that make up Malaysia over not much longer than the past century. This highlights the difficulties and dynamics of constituting what is a nation, when population movements have been such a significant determinant. Core values of nationhood have been severely contested, and were put into public debate once again by then Prime Minister Mahathir’s announcement that Malaysia was not simply an Islamic nation, but is a fundamentalist Islamic state (CNN 2002).

## 6. Conclusion

There is a complex relationship between global processes that are opening up when it comes to goods, capital and information; limited by the carriers when it comes to ideas, and closing somewhat when it comes to the flow of people. For the recipient society, the economic gains are greatest from allowing the unskilled to be used and

<sup>12</sup> In the negotiations that led to the granting of independence in 1957, the leader of the three communities represented by UMNO, the MCA and the MIC reached an understanding, the essence of which was that Malays would be dominant in government while non-Malays were granted citizenship and assured that their position in the economy would not be disturbed (Crouch 1996: 157).

<sup>13</sup> Lukman Mohamad (2001) argues that nation (in this context, people) must be present before a country is created and therefore the Malaysian nation is present before the formation of Malaysia. That Malaysian nation is known as *bangsa Melayu* or the Malay nation. He further opines that the Malaysian nation had undergone a dynamic transformation from one that symbolises mono-ethnic Malay to one that symbolises multi-ethnic Malaysians. This transformation is a result of the country’s independence and the need to downgrade the use of “Malay nation” to “Malay race” to truly represent the country’s three major ethnic groups as one nation. He likens the Malays to a nation that has lost its country, just like the Maori in New Zealand. Lukman concludes with the comment that Malays have lost the land in which they can fully identify themselves, unlike the Chinese and Indians who still can identify themselves with China or India.

then the used goods returned to sender. However, the highest costs and greatest challenges arise if and when that unskilled labour settles down in a new society, have children and make demands as new citizens, as is evident from US studies.

The strategy of the Malaysian and of most Southeast Asian governments has been to promote regional integration in most spheres *except* that pertaining to citizenship and a free flow of people into their nation-state. In that realm the national barriers have been strongly erected and asserted, with very limited ultimate tolerance of outsiders. National governments are responsible to constituents only, tend to make it very difficult for migrant labourers to achieve that citizenship, and strongly resist and resent transnational flows of political ideas, whether the ideas are those of *reformasi* or *Jemaah Islamiah*. The realities of regional integration, whether within the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN), ASEAN+3, or Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation (APEC) and the broader Pacific Rim, must take very serious account of the *national basis of political authority*, and enhanced barriers to the permanent migration of people.

## Note

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### About the Author

Michael Leigh is professor of contemporary Asia at the Asia Institute, University of Melbourne (Australia) and director of the Aceh Research Training Institute at Universitas Syiah Kuala (Indonesia). In 2007 he was elected president of the Asian Studies Association of Australia. His previous positions include director of the Institute of East Asian Studies at Universiti Malaysia Sarawak and head of the Department of Government and Public Administration at the University of Sydney. His most recent publication is *Transformations in Eastern Malaysia* (University of New England Asia Centre, Armidale 2007). Email: [mleigh@unimelb.edu.au](mailto:mleigh@unimelb.edu.au)

# **Transnationalism in an Uncertain Environment: Relationship between Migration, Policy and Theory**

CHRISTINE INGLIS

*Multicultural and Migration Research Centre, Department of Sociology and  
Social Policy, University of Sydney*

*The purpose of this paper is to reintroduce theory into the debate on migration policy and show its relevance for policy-makers and others seeking to understand new challenges to understanding migration and the patterns of migrant incorporation in the contemporary world where concerns about national security and identity have come to dominate so much of the debate. Key influences on the debates have involved concerns about the spread of diseases via migratory movements; cross-border criminal activities including human trafficking, the illicit drug trade and money laundering; the impact of climate change and environmental disasters; and political upheavals causing renewed refugee flows. Of particular importance have been concerns about terrorism in industrialised immigration countries. The uncertainties associated with these new challenges facing policy-makers cannot easily be understood by extrapolations from older approaches to migration and migrant incorporation. In particular, the paper explores the relevance of the transnationalism paradigm to better understanding the nexus between the phenomena of migration, policy relating to the flows of people and their incorporation into new societies, and related theoretical conceptualisations in the current climate of enhanced international and domestic uncertainty and insecurity, taking the Asia Pacific region as an example.*

**A**t the beginning of the twenty-first century, the terrorist attacks on the United States on 11 September 2001 became the focal point around which policy-makers and scholars came to address a new set of challenges relating to migration. Already, in the previous quarter of a century, quantitative and qualitative changes in the nature of international migration and population movements had brought migratory movements and their longer-term implications to the forefront in national and international policy discussions. They had also attracted the attention of a new generation of scholars who, like the policy-makers, were concerned to better understand the major changes which were occurring in the source and destination countries involved in migratory flows and the new forms of migration.

The initial impetus for these changes arose from the impact of globalisation and economic development outside the traditional industrialised nations. They were also linked to political developments associated with the end of the Cold War, the internal political changes in former socialist states, and conflicts resulting from power vacuums in the superpowers' former client regimes.

A shared feature of the challenges identified following the events of 9/11 was that they involved a new set of political and social uncertainties which had not previously played a significant part in migration debates and policies. These include: the spread of diseases such as SARS via migratory movements; criminal activities including human trafficking, the illicit drug trade and money laundering; the impact of climate change and environmental disasters on fragile ecosystems leading to migration and refugee movements; and political upheavals causing renewed refugee flows and terrorism in industrialised immigration countries.

Each of these uncertainties, with the exception of political refugees, introduced a new dimension into the more traditional discussions of migration policy. They have contributed to often extremely populist debates about migratory movements, and provided support to those concerned that international population mobility is an extremely fraught area with negative implications for national and international security. Nowhere are these latest developments more evident than in the Asia Pacific region. Often discussions about the challenges of migration focus either on describing the changing patterns of migration and the incorporation of migrants into their new country of residence, or examining the implementation and outcomes (intended and unintended) of policy changes. The purpose of this paper is to reintroduce theory into the debate and show its relevance for policy-makers and others seeking to understand these new challenges, which cannot easily be understood by extrapolations from older approaches to migration and migrant incorporation. In particular, it explores the relevance of the transnationalism paradigm to better understanding the nexus between the phenomena of migration, policy relating to the flows of people and their incorporation into new societies, and related theoretical conceptualisations in the current climate of enhanced international and domestic uncertainty and insecurity.

To set the context for this exploration the first section of the paper compares the "idealised" and the "real" relationships which connect the three dimensions of migration, policy and theory. This is followed by noting certain key features of the diverse patterns of migration and settlement in the Asia Pacific region. Next the paper addresses the key features of transnationalism as a theoretical paradigm and why it now competes with earlier models. These models had their origins in attempts to understand the impact and settlement outcomes of migratory movements to Western industrialised nations, especially those often described as the "new countries" of immigration such as Australia, New Zealand, the United States and Canada. However, this paper argues that transnationalism is also particularly pertinent to examining migration and migrant incorporation in the Asia

Pacific region. It concludes by considering examples which show how the transnationalism paradigm can contribute to more informed policy-making by providing an alternative perspective for developing policy-relevant research to address the new challenges associated with population movements.

## 1. Relationship between Migration, Policy and Theory

Positing a triangular nexus between the phenomena of migration, policy and theory may seem somewhat unusual as discussions concerning the “challenges” involving migration typically focus on the policy issues associated with migration. In such settings, “research” is far more likely to join “migration” and “policy” at the triangular discussion table. The “research” invited to the table is typically that which provides detailed description of trends in migratory movements or policies. It also may involve efforts to link migratory trends to particular policy initiatives or outcomes. Rarely is the research intentionally informed by particular conceptual paradigms or theoretical models.

Of course there is an often uncertain dividing line between “description” and “explanation”. But the latter is typically informed by adopting a theory or paradigm. This posits relationships between a number of entities such that it prioritises some as keys to change or, alternatively, to conservation and stability. Such knowledge is particularly valuable when discussing policy formulation as it can provide policy-makers with specific “tools” or “levers” for achieving their objectives to change society. However, theoretically based approaches to migration and the incorporation of migrants have tended to be the preserve of scholars, many of whom have had limited interest in considering their relevance for policy except where the policies are the object of their research. Familiar theoretical paradigms include Marxian analyses and approaches adopting a globalisation perspective.

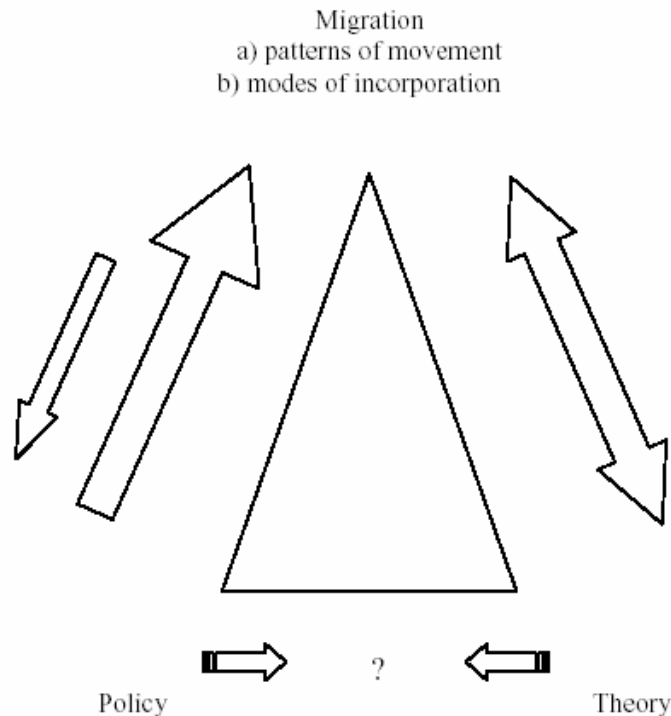
### 1.1. The “ideal” relationship between migration, policy and theory

Before considering the utility of transnationalism as a paradigm with the potential to connect with policy, it is useful to consider the normative/ideal way of understanding the nexus which exists between migration trends, policy and theory. There are two specific features of migration trends which need to be separated. These are the actual patterns of movements and the modes of incorporation. The latter refers to the way in which migrants become part of their societies of residence. While the two aspects are often treated as separate phenomena by policy-makers and in general debates, this is often a somewhat artificial distinction given the extensive interconnections between them especially from the perspective of the migrants. This is illustrated in Figure 1.

The way the three dimensions are linked schematically in Figure 1 is a composite based on the differential perspectives of policy-makers, theorists and the migrants themselves. *Policy-makers* have a clear action orientation to achieve their policy

objectives. From their perspective, their policy initiatives play a major part in determining the type of migratory movements which affect their countries. They do this by controlling the patterns of arrivals and departures. They also develop policies which set the framework to determine how the migrants are incorporated into the nation. In the current climate of uncertainty surrounding migration, one of the major trends has been for policy-makers to make increasing efforts to control migration through developing national and international policy regimes. Indeed, one of the features of the debates surrounding migration is the existence of a discourse which emphasises that only through such control can international population movements retain their legitimacy within society.

**Figure 1:** The “Ideal” Relationship between Migration, Policy and Theory



While positing the dominance of policy, policy-makers recognise the potential for the emergence of new patterns of migration. These, however, are viewed mainly as a result of unanticipated developments in social, economic or political affairs in source countries which affect the propensity to migrate. Such developments are referred to in the literature as “push” factors. Policy-makers then address these “unplanned” or “unforeseen” movements by the development of new reactive policy responses which modify existing policies. Responses to refugee flows and specific refugee needs often have this highly reactive quality.

Whereas policy-makers privilege the importance of their policies, *theorists* are concerned to understand the migration process itself, including patterns of movement and modes of incorporation. The genesis of theoretical models may be inductive or deductive. Theorists vary considerably in the extent to which they “impose” their theory on data. Nevertheless, the scholarly ideology of a “value free” social science, even though subject to considerable questioning, constitutes a legitimating mechanism which favours exploring the two-way relationship between theory and “facts”. This is in contrast to the world of policy and programme formulation. Whether the actions of policy-makers and their policies receive attention from the theorists depends on the type of theoretical model. For example, those theories which adopt a focus on the individual rather than on the role of institutional structures typically ignore the role of policy.

From the perspective of *migrants* and potential migrants, the policies of destination countries, even if they have a detailed knowledge of them, may be only one of many factors which affect their migration and settlement. Even less influential are theoretical models which are rarely considered by migrants, even at the level of popular “folk” models and explanations. Considerations which also influence their decisions include the policies of their existing country of residence, non-state policies adopted by economic agents and those in other institutional sectors, as well as community-based and personal considerations involving family and friends. As already noted, while the migrant perspective is ostensibly a key dimension influencing both policy-makers and theorists, neither may give it much attention if their concern is with institutional structures and the role of top-down, macro-level programmes.

### *1.2. The “reality” of the relationship between migration, policy and theory*

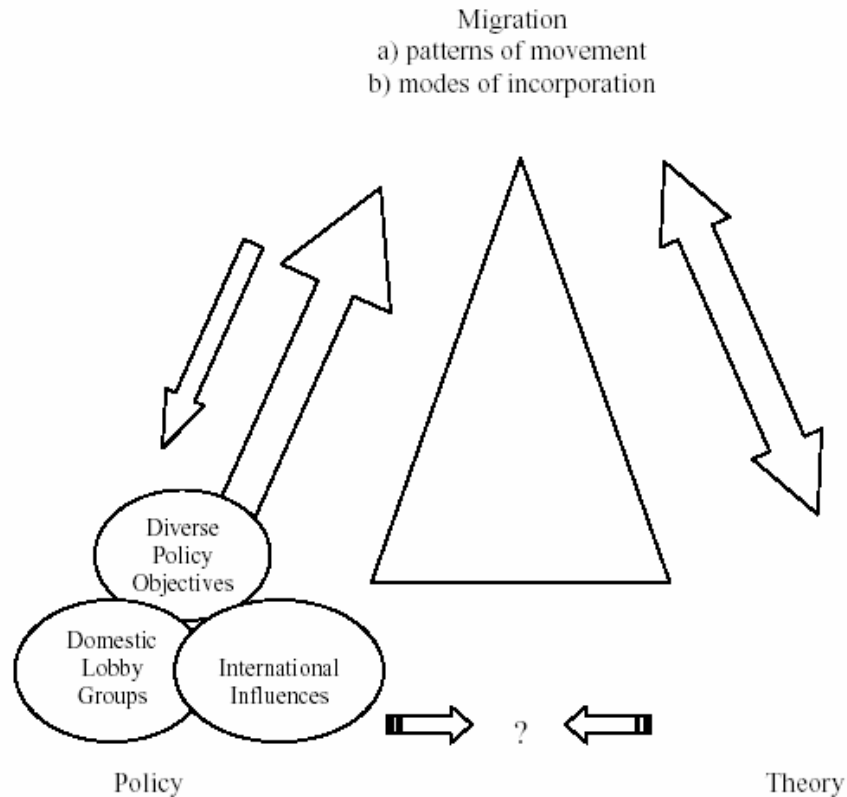
As already noted, there is little in this outline of the “normative/ideal” model which envisages a connection between policy and theory. The “ideal” model only partially helps us when it comes to understanding the reality of the relationship between migration, policy and theory. This can be illustrated from the perspective of policy, where numerous factors create much greater complexity in the policy formulation and implementation process than is envisaged in the ideal model, shown in Figure 2.

The first factor is that migration policies are required to address diverse objectives that may include the following issues:

- Domestic economic development as well as international trade objectives. The influence of these objectives is evident, for example, in the priority which is given to particular types of movement, including that of tourists, students, unskilled and skilled labour, and entrepreneurs.

- International economic development objectives. These involve relations with lesser developed countries concerned about their loss of (skilled) labour, obtaining remittances and knowledge transfer.
- Humanitarian objectives involving refugees, asylum seekers and displaced persons.
- Family welfare objectives which include opportunities for family reunification.
- Demographic objectives which involve the management of population growth.
- Domestic political objectives that relate to social equity, the absence of conflict, achieving social cohesion and constructing national identity.
- Geopolitical and diplomatic objectives involving relations with regional neighbours and, also, migrant sending countries. Specific issues include those related to the status of political refugees and asylum seekers and the operation of entry policies such as the White Australia Policy.

**Figure 2:** The “Reality” of the Relationship between Migration, Policy and Theory



The point in listing this range of objectives which migration policy is called upon to address is to highlight the potential for diverse objectives to result in conflicting policy options. One of the frequent areas of conflict is between economic growth and social equity. An example of this is striking a balance between the need for additional labour without at the same time compromising social equity and the human rights of temporary and/or illegal migrants.

A second factor complicating policy-making and creating tensions is the existence of internal domestic lobby groups each with their own specific agenda. Government departments, too, may pursue different policy objectives which often involve preferences for economic as distinct from social objectives. One such example occurred in Australia in the 1980s when the introduction of fee-paying places for international students in Australian education heralded a policy shift for education away from being part of the government's international aid programme to being part of its foreign trade policy. While the department responsible for educational matters was extensively promoting the opportunities in overseas countries, other departments responsible for immigration and foreign affairs were concerned about the potential difficulties associated with an influx of individuals



whose educational objectives were unclear and who might overstay their student visas.

Adding to this complexity is a third factor which involves the impact of external influences on state policy-makers. One feature of globalisation is that nation-states are now being lobbied and pressured by a range of international organisations and groupings as well as economic entities, civil society groups and international non-governmental organisations (NGOs). Pressure from these lobbies can intervene between policy-makers and their preferred goals and activities. Examples include:

- Efforts to establish international regimes to govern the movement of peoples which include regional efforts like those involving the Association of Southeast Asian Nations (ASEAN) and APEC (Asia-Pacific Economic Cooperation), or bilateral arrangements such as those involving New Zealand and various Pacific nations. The impact of these pressures depends on the extent to which the receiving country is persuaded of the value of these forms of cooperation and/or has the ability to withstand external pressures. So far Australia has, for example, resisted requests for the relocation /allocation of land to small Pacific nations such as Tuvalu which are threatened by inundation. It has also resisted recommendations from a Report of its own Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs, Defence and Trade, which were raised again recently by Pacific countries, to offer temporary seasonal agricultural work opportunities to workers from the Pacific Islands (Australia Senate Committee on Foreign Affairs Defence and Trade 2003).
- International conventions and agreements concerning human rights. Note, though, that the extent to which individual nations are signatories and observe key treaties and conventions is highly problematic, as the experience with the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of their Families demonstrates. In this case, the only Asian Pacific countries which have ratified the Convention are the Philippines, Sri Lanka and Timor-Leste, all major exporters of migrant labour. Notable by their absence are other countries in the region which are major importers of migrant labour.
- Economic initiatives involving commercial interests seeking international labour as well as associations of skilled professionals concerned about access for their members and international recognition of their qualifications and rights to professional practice. These groups have been reasonably successful in achieving their objectives which are promoted in the name of furthering economic investment in a destination country and increasing its opportunities for international trade advantages. Often such issues are covered in free trade agreements which are becoming increasingly common in the Asia Pacific region. An example of the success

of such lobbying was the inclusion of provisions in the 2003 Singapore-Australia Free Trade Agreement<sup>1</sup> relating to the supply of professional services such as:

- easing of the conditions for the establishment of joint ventures involving Australian law firms;
- doubling of the number of Australian law degrees recognised in Singapore from four to eight;
- removal, or easing, of residency requirements for Australian professionals;
- movement towards mutual recognition agreements between architects and engineers.

## **2. Migration in the Asia-Pacific**

The countries of the Asia Pacific region are highly diverse in their geography, history, societies and political structures. Thus it is not surprising that the region has also been characterised by extensive diversity in the patterns of migration and incorporation, and the policies related to these matters. Whereas some countries such as Australia have been major countries of immigration, others, such as the Philippines, are major sources of government-encouraged emigration. Yet others, such as Malaysia, are both major destinations and important source countries for migrants. There also are substantial differences with regard to the patterns of migration and incorporation which have been favoured in the various migrant receiving countries which are the focus of this paper. For countries such as Australia and Singapore, immigrants have been critical to their national social, political and economic development. In contrast, many sections of society in other countries such as Japan and Korea perceive migrants as constituting a threat to their national identity and the social contract involving existing citizens. In the ever shifting balance between seeking economic advantage and preserving social cohesion and national identity, particularly in these latter countries, the emphasis has been very much on resisting permanent legal migration. Where migration has been allowed, the tendency has been to restrict it primarily to temporary and short term movements. Such movements are not, however, restricted to these countries. Singapore is a prime example of a country which has separate policies for the less skilled, temporary workers and the highly skilled professional, technical and service workers who are more easily able to acquire long term and permanent residency.

A key point to note here is that migration policy issues in the Asia Pacific involve not only the nature of the migration policies associated with short and long-term arrivals, whether they be workers, family members, refugees or international

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<sup>1</sup> [http://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/negotiations/australia\\_singapore\\_agreement.html](http://www.dfat.gov.au/trade/negotiations/australia_singapore_agreement.html)

students and tourists. They also include the development of specific institutional structures and policies concerning the incorporation of the new arrivals. These directly affect the arrivals' access to services and resources, as well as their ability to participate in the larger society. Ultimately, they play a critical role in how individual migrants relate to that society in terms of intentions to reside, their commitment to the country and their relations with other countries and societies. While the modes of incorporation favoured by migrants (as opposed to those encouraged by policy-makers) are typically extremely diverse and characterised by flexibility and mutation, their actual outcomes need to be considered as a reflection of policy influences at the national level which are rooted in developments within local communities, as well as in the daily lives and encounters of individuals.

Despite this diversity in policies and migrant strategies throughout the region, there are also certain similarities. The first is that migration is acknowledged as a major factor in economic development. It can supply labour market needs, whether these be for skilled or unskilled labour. It provides the consumers for local manufacturing as was the case for post-World War II Australia and, more recently, the tourists, international students and the increasing number of health tourists who support the local service industries in countries like Australia, Singapore and Thailand. Secondly, governments in the region have become major actors in the control and promotion of migrant entry and determining how they can become incorporated into society. Since the beginning of the twenty-first century, new public and governmental concerns about cross-border criminal activities, terrorism and the spread of disease have given further impetus to government involvement. Thus it is important to consider whether there are now increasing convergences in the policies and patterns relating to migration in the region? And, if so, what factors contribute to this convergence?

From an Australian perspective one of the most noteworthy moves towards convergence is the shift over the last decade towards increasing opportunities for temporary, long-term and economic movements, including those where the selection process essentially rests with the prospective employers. While initially targeting the highly skilled, in the current economic climate it is also evident that, in Australia, extensive use is being made of the 457 visa category to bring in numerous lower skilled workers. It is also worth noting that the Australian Working Holiday Maker Program<sup>2</sup> has been a major source of temporary workers in the tourism, construction and agricultural sectors as young, often highly educated, people work in these sectors of the economy while on their "holiday" in Australia. This thereby provides an important source of additional labour which elsewhere is provided by temporary contract labour migration. As this highlights, there can be a functional interchangeability between categories of migratory programmes despite apparently overt differences in their objectives. While Australia has moved towards relaxing restrictions on temporary entry, there is less

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.immi.gov.au/visitors/working-holiday/index.htm>

evidence that those Asian countries, which have relied extensively on contract and temporary workers to meet the labour market needs associated with economic growth, are providing increasing opportunities for permanent migration. Despite this, in many cases they, like the earlier experience of Western European countries, are finding that opportunities exist for temporary workers to extend their stays, legally or illegally, for longer periods of time.

One of the factors contributing to growing convergence is the increasing incidence of administrative cooperation, together with moves towards the development of regional responses to address concerns about security and crime. Another factor is the move to facilitate business movements and migration within the APEC region. Also contributing is the homogenising influence of globalisation, which has extended and diversified international economic relations, affected the autonomy of state action, and facilitated the spread of cultural forms and practices. The extent of this impact, especially with regard to cultural homogenisation has, however, been questioned by those who emphasise the continuing existence of local forms, and even their development within a wider international system (Ley 2004). Clearly there is scope to explore further factors related to the changing assessment of convergence. One of these is provided by the transnationalism paradigm which has gained prominence as a means of understanding and conceptualising the contemporary migration experience.

### **3. Transnationalism as a Theoretical Paradigm**

Throughout the twentieth century the focus of much mainstream social science research on migratory movements was on the New World countries of immigration such as Australia, Canada and the United States, which were committed to national development based on extensive immigration. The focus of theorising was on patterns of settlement and incorporation and the related issue of interethnic relations and ensuring an absence of social conflict. The dominant theoretical model, in these countries (and many European countries such as France), was that of assimilation, which anticipated a process whereby incorporation involved the total “disappearance” of the newcomers and minorities into the larger society. This was a theory which actually “mimicked” the contemporary official policies concerning incorporation. In this it was an exception to the previous depiction of the idealised model of the relationship between policy and theory. Significantly, however, assimilation theory was driven by (and reflected) official and popular policy, rather than by a desire to question or influence policy formulation.

By the end of the twentieth century the official policies of assimilation had experienced sustained questioning when it was realised that they were often counterproductive as they failed to recognise:

- the time needed for the individual migrants to change, especially in the absence of policies designed to support changes, including opportunities to learn the national language.
- the questioning by the minorities of the necessity and/or desirability of certain types of changes. An important element associated with this questioning were the migrants' continuing links, real and subjective, with their "homelands". These were mediated in diverse ways by personal links, political, economic and religious relations or ongoing cultural contacts.
- the barriers which existed within the receiving society towards acceptance of the minorities despite their efforts to change and assimilate.

As a result of these concerns there was a move towards greater acceptance of diversity within many countries but, as we see especially in contemporary Europe, there is now a renewed focus on assimilationist policies. These forms often appear in the guise of "integration", especially in the wake of the growing public focus on the cultural-religious "dangers" attached to Islam in political and popular discourse. One of the most visible signs of this trend is the move to establish tests to determine the cultural compatibility of prospective citizens and, in some cases, migrants with the dominant population.

Despite this reversion in the area of public policy, theoretical models or paradigms of assimilation have not regained their prominence. This is due to recognition of their overly simplistic assumptions about the preconditions for individual and group change. Brubaker (2001) has argued that in the United States the continued focus on assimilation research during the 1990s was characterised by a more questioning examination of the process of assimilation which involved a nuanced exploration of the forms of assimilation, the time dimension of changes, and an awareness of difference in reference populations. Nevertheless, the assimilation approach was hindered by a continuing emphasis on developments only within the country of residence, thereby taking the nation-state as the unit of analysis. At the same time, the focus continued to be on the individual rather than on the institutional structures and their role in facilitating or hindering assimilation. Another tendency was that there was limited attention to the factors associated with changes towards greater assimilation.

One of the major factors which has influenced recent theoretical developments has been the growing recognition of the importance of ties and linkages with the country of origin. The initial focus on discussing these links in terms of "diasporas", characterised as groups which retained close links with their countries of origin, was followed by recognition of the limitations in this paradigm. Apart from concerns about the broadening of the traditional usage, in which a diaspora involved those who were actually "exiles" from a homeland, other criticisms focussed on the static, essentialised and often highly instrumental depictions of diasporas (Ang 1994). These limitations led to the development during the 1990s of the paradigm of "transnationalism" (Glick Schiller et al. 1992; Portes 1999;

Portes et al. 1999; Vertovec 1999; Faist 2000). This paradigm specifically acknowledges the extent to which national boundaries are highly porous, and that much of what is involved in the actual process of migration and incorporation cannot be understood by simply focusing on developments within the nation-state. An awareness of the porosity of nation-state boundaries has been given increasing recognition since the mid-1970s as the economic, political and cultural dimensions of globalisation associated with major technological advances have gained increasing recognition. What the transnational paradigm in fact does is draw attention to the way in which these developments also impinge on immigrants and minority communities in ways which facilitate the maintenance and development of their ties to individuals and groups from their countries of origin, whether still living there or in other parts of the world. In doing so it is fast becoming the dominant paradigm for discussing migratory movements and incorporation (Dunn 2005). In identifying transnationalism as a paradigm, it is important to note that in contrast to a specific theory or hypothesis, the value of a paradigm lies in its ability to focus on key dimensions of particular social phenomena which, in the case of transnationalism, involve mobility and incorporation.

Five features characterise the transnational paradigm and distinguish it from other theoretical models. The first major characteristic of the transnationalism paradigm is that it considers that the process of migration and incorporation cannot be understood within the boundaries of a single state, whether this is the country of origin or the country of residence. Simple push-pull factors associated with either state cannot explain the process of migratory movements. Nor can the incorporation of migrants be understood by assuming that, on arrival, all their ties with their former country of residence are cut off, negated or lost.

The second feature is that instead of viewing migratory movements as necessarily unidirectional and non-recurring, they are viewed as potentially multiple and on-going. In some cases there may be circular patterns of movements, in others the migratory movements may be highly complex and involve several countries.

This leads to the third characteristic, which is that migration and incorporation (what was traditionally referred to as “settlement”) are viewed as dynamic and interrelated processes which should be viewed in a holistic and non-linear fashion. It is this specific feature which is particularly relevant to discussions of “identity”, “belonging”, “commitment” and “citizenship”, and addressing public concerns about political insecurity and uncertainties, including terrorism.

The fourth feature of the paradigm is that it includes three levels of social scale. These range from the level of individual actions and subjectivities to the mid level of community and local neighbourhoods and, finally, the macro-level of the nation and states. At each level different actors are seen as affecting the forms and extent of transnationalism. This contrasts with models such as the neo-liberal assimilation model which focuses on the individual. It also contrasts with models which focus

on major state/market institutions such as those adopting a neo-Marxist perspective. This multi-scale approach provides the transnationalism paradigm with a direct rationale for exploring how the organisation of community political activity outside the country of origin can lead to “home” state responses to monitor and/or contain these activities. Similarly, it facilitates exploration of how individual linkages and subjective ties are influenced by state decisions.

A fifth feature of the paradigm is that it does not necessarily privilege or prioritise a particular form of international relationship, such as economic or family ties and networks. Rather, it provides scope for exploring their relevance alongside political, religious, educational and other linkages. The origins of the transnationalism paradigm lie not in a specific policy approach, nor in an abstract theoretical construct. Rather, it has developed as a response to the shortcomings evident in empirical research, which highlight the limitations and oversights of existing paradigms used to understand migration and incorporation. As such, the specific hypotheses derived from the transnationalism paradigm are generated from research findings which direct attention to the importance of particular types of (inter-)relationships in a specific setting or among a specific ethnic community. It also suggests the importance of comparing groups and societies to ascertain the differential significance and forms of transnationalism which exist. Its particular advantage is its holistic approach which includes all levels of society, thus facilitating its ability to direct attention to and focus on “new” phenomena and the need to explore their interrelationships. Inevitably, this results in a more complex envisaging and understanding of the processes of migration and incorporation.

While transnationalism has attracted increasing attention and support from scholars, there has also been extensive debate as the work of developing and exploring its utility and relevance is actively pursued. In this, it shares many of the features of similar debates concerning globalisation with which it has a number of interesting linkages and parallels.

Several different themes characterise the debate. These include:

- Its precise definition and hence what phenomena to study (Portes 1999; Vertovec 1999; Kivisto 2001; Dunn 2005). Does it refer to actual patterns of population movement? The existence of international social relations or linkages? The existence of new social spaces? Cultural expressions and practices linked to an “origin” area or the transformation of cultural practices into a “new” or “hybrid” form? And what is the role of complex patterns of affective phenomena such as belonging and identification?
- Whether transnationalism characterises all immigrant groups or whether there are variations and, if so, what accounts for them (Kivisto 2001)? What is the role of geographical distance; of the social and cultural characteristics of the migrant group; of the “home” state and the state and society in the current country of residence?

- Whether transnationalism is a new phenomenon (Foner 1997; Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004; Waldinger 2006)? Or is it a phenomenon that has always existed, but has been given particular prominence as a result of globalisation, which is associated with increasing ease of population movement and the opportunities provided by new technology to maintain easy and cheap contacts internationally?
- What are the relations between different levels of the state, civil society and individuals in transnationalism (Smith and Guarnizo 1998; Levitt 2001; Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004)? Is it a top-down phenomenon in which states are actively involved or, is it a grass-roots phenomenon with linkages and practices developed by individuals? Hence, are the links between nations or, instead, between local and “home” regions, towns or villages?
- How should one evaluate transnationalism (Waldinger and Fitzgerald 2004)? Is it linked to a growing cosmopolitanism or is this only evident among highly skilled, professional and technical workers? Does it result in a distancing from the local population in the “home” region and, especially, in other areas where the individuals are located? Does it undermine “commitment” and “loyalty” to a particular nation-state?

While the themes of the debate are often posed in a manner which questions the accuracy of various claims or the foci of particular authors, such issues are actually matters for empirical investigation rather than necessarily questioning transnationalism’s value as a paradigm. This is well illustrated in a recent examination of the factors, especially at the national level, which influence the significance of transnational links and ties between the country of origin and the country of residence (Waldinger 2006). As the author points out, transnational linkages and relations are not entirely new. However, in the course of developing his argument he has demonstrated both the complexity of the factors which affect transnational linkages and the ability of the paradigm to provide a basis for developing this more nuanced understanding of the migration process.

#### **4. Transnationalism’s Relevance to Understanding Migration in the Asia Pacific in the Twenty-First Century and Identifying Policy Challenges**

Given that the origins of the transnationalism paradigm are in North American and European research, particularly in migratory movements from neighbouring regions such as Central America or North Africa and the Middle East, an obvious question is the empirical relevance of transnationalism to the Asia Pacific. In fact, some of the strongest evidence in support of arguments that transnationalism is not a new phenomenon but, rather, has a long history, comes from the Asia Pacific region. In particular, the migrations of Chinese and Indians in the late nineteenth



and early twentieth century provide clear examples of diverse and non-permanent movements from the village or region of origin to other countries which were also staging posts to further movements (Pan 1998; Lal et al. 2006). Descriptions of the Chinese migrants to the New World as “sojourners” identifies these trends, as do their use of diverse links and networks to facilitate their movements as well as their economic, political and social activities and modes of incorporation (Pan 1998). Examples of Chinese movements within the Nanyang suggest that the role of geographical propinquity can facilitate the development and maintenance of transnationalism. However, even in the more distant New World countries, links were maintained with China and with the natal village. Common practices such as chain migration, arranged marriages and the temporary interment of deceased Chinese pending their transfer back to their home village attest to the continuing strength of transnational sentiments and relations.

Contemporary developments in the Asia Pacific area also point to many examples of transnationalism. These include those where the “home” state seeks to maintain contact with their (former) citizens and residents and where the “receiving” state develops policies to utilise the links of the migrants for diplomatic and economic advantage. Examples of “top down” transnational strategies by states include the growing attention to and valuing of their overseas “nationals” and people by countries such as China, India and Singapore. They involve special economic and investment policies, preferential status on return visits, and even special institutional structures such as the Singapore International Foundation, which has responsibility to maintain and develop links with Singaporeans living elsewhere. In the Pacific region both Taiwan and the People’s Republic of China have strategies to use their locally based citizens for support in the struggle for diplomatic advantage. These have received extensive publicity in the wake of recent conflicts in the Solomons, New Hebrides and Fiji, where intervention in the domestic political process by the two Chinas has been identified as a factor in the conflicts. In other cases, home states have adopted policies to monitor the economic and political activities of individuals living overseas. Thus Singapore has used its Central Provident Fund as a way of tracing contributors living overseas. Similarly, Malaysia is a country which has had an interest in monitoring (for welfare, as well as political reasons) its overseas students. China’s interest in monitoring Fa Lun Gong supporters is also well documented. In these instances, the potential transnational activities of emigrants are viewed by the country of origin as having potentially negative impacts on the home country. More positive expectations underlie the strategies of government in countries of residence and their institutions such as universities to use the transnational contacts and knowledge of current residents, students and workers, with the objectives of developing economic and intellectual connections.

However, transnationalism is not just evident in the “top down” strategies and practices of the state. As a growing research literature also demonstrates, individuals in the Asia Pacific region also maintain a diverse and extensive set of

transnational relationships and practices (Yeoh et al. 2005). The existence of transnational processes among individual migrants in the Asia Pacific and, also, the adoption of policies and strategies by governments and institutions to utilise and further develop these processes suggests that from a conceptual and policy perspective transnationalism is a useful paradigm for understanding migration and incorporation in the Asia Pacific. This does not, in itself, show that theorists contribute to the policy-making process. Indeed, some policy-makers would perhaps be tempted to say “welcome to ‘discovering’ transnationalism” as an ongoing part of reality in the Asia Pacific region. What can be argued, however, is that the transnationalism paradigm does make a significant contribution to policy formulation through the way it provides a fresh perspective for undertaking research which is not bound by national boundaries or by a focus on migration at only one level, whether this be that of the individual, the community, or the state. Through encouraging such research a much more complex and subtle understanding of the factors influencing migration and incorporation is obtained. This is of particular benefit to policy-makers who have a tendency to work at the more abstract and homogenising national level of knowledge in developing policies and identifying target groups. More nuanced information and knowledge are of particular importance in the face of public opinion, which is even less likely to be aware of the complexities associated with the incorporation of immigrant minorities. The need for such knowledge is of particular importance in circumstances where a climate of insecurity and fear surrounds relations between diverse ethnic and minority groups. As a recent discussion of the bases for such fears related to international terrorism, crime and violence has argued:

A significant danger for states would, however, ... be to overreact to these threats in ways that unnecessarily curtail the many benefits of international migration including benefits that enhance overall levels of state security and international stability (Adamson 2006: 198).

One particular value of the transnationalism paradigm for policy-makers is that it problematises the links between subjective and sentimental attachments and the actual social relations which cross national and regional boundaries. In doing so it encourages research that explores the complexities of such relationships and allows these to be taken into account in policy formulation. Furthermore, it highlights how simple, unitary forms of identity, commitment and belonging, including a sense of “citizenship”, rarely exist. Reality is in fact far more complex. Transnationalism’s ability to elucidate this complexity is particularly important when fears and uncertainties about the “other” and their loyalty are gaining widespread currency throughout the Asia Pacific. This development results from campaigns and discourse which highlight political and criminal threats attributed to the “other”, which have now been superimposed on the more traditional concerns about the economic and cultural threats they are believed to represent. Especially in circumstances where public opinion can be a powerful political force susceptible to manipulation, a major issue for policy-makers in defining the migratory challenges

for the twenty-first century is to overcome such simplistic understandings among the public, as well as in the development of their own policies.

Two examples illustrate the utility of the paradigm in formulating policy. The first example relates to the increasingly sensitive political issue of citizenship and the tendency to address it by moving to a more restrictive and exclusionary form which makes access to citizenship more difficult for immigrants. Many of the new proposals for citizenship tests are based on the assumption that prospective citizens must adhere to the values of the majority population which they are assumed not to share. This view reflects the existence of stereotypical understandings of the values of other groups and religious traditions such as Islam. Such populist calls for shared values are more difficult for policy-makers to address effectively than are calls for migrants and citizens to be fluent in the national language. Apart from the difficulty of determining an individual's values on the basis of a simple written test, major problems surround the identification of any society's "core values", let alone their putative difference from those held by individual immigrants and ethnic groups. Alongside such practical issues relating to defining and assessing values as the criteria for citizenship there is a more fundamental set of ongoing political and philosophical discussions about the need for a broader conception of citizenship. These take account of its social dimensions and the exponential increase in international mobility (Ip et al. 1997; Kymlicka 2004). A major focus of these debates about citizenship concerns its non-legalistic dimensions. The transnational paradigm provides a vantage point from which to understand how citizenship relates to closely connected phenomena such as personal values and the sense of "identity", "belonging" and "home", and the potential effect on these sentiments of experiences of discrimination and marginalisation. The paradigm also facilitates a focus on how these sentiments and values affect individual behaviour, including the acquisition of citizenship rights that allow individuals to participate in the political process in more than one country. Through contributing to an understanding of these processes, the transnationalism paradigm and the research it generates provides policy-makers with a solid knowledge basis to more effectively assess the "dangers" posed by migrants, as well as the likely impact of policy measures on their continuing loyalty and commitment to the current country of residence.

The second example of how the transnational paradigm can assist in developing effective policies relates to international trade and investment, including remittances. Concerns about the way the monetary transfers from the country of residence can lead to the "loss" of these resources exist in many public discussions. At the same time a more positive assessment of international economic flows is that they can contribute to the country of residence's income from international trade in goods and services. While policy-makers have available to them substantial knowledge of how large companies operate, the transnationalism paradigm also directs attention to economic (trans)actions involving individuals and small and medium business enterprises. These enterprises are a major sector in

all national economies, yet one about which relatively little is known. By generating research and a more detailed understanding of how employees and entrepreneurs are actually involved in transnational practices, policy-makers are better able to formulate policy while, at the same time, the general public is also assisted to determine the validity of often highly generalised concerns about the “flight” or “loss” of money.

## 5. Conclusion

Migration poses challenges not only for policy-makers, but also for scholars who are seeking to understand it and the impact of changing patterns of diversity in society. This paper has focussed on examining the transnational paradigm which reconceptualises approaches to the theorisation of migration and modes of incorporation of the migrants in their new countries of residence. One of the features of the transnational paradigm is its ability to take account of policy formulation which constitutes one level of influence on migration and incorporation. But, as I have argued, the process is an interactive one. Just as policy may inform theory there is scope for theoretical paradigms to also contribute to policy formulation by providing new perspectives to consider in developing policy responses. As the transnationalism paradigm shows, theory also generates research which contributes to more detailed policy options. Despite the scholarly debates surrounding the transnational paradigm, it has the important advantage for policy-makers of introducing more realism into understanding how individuals and groups make decisions about migration and the factors which affect further mobility and their links with other countries. In the uncertain environment which now exists, how these linkages relate to issues of loyalty, commitment and belonging is one of the major issues associated with the formulation of policies for migration and migrant incorporation which benefit the state, individual migrants, and their country of origin.

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### About the Author

Christine Inglis is director of the Multicultural and Migration Research Centre at the University of Sydney. She has recently completed a major project on Chinese and Turkish transnationalism from an Australian perspective. This project is now being extended into a comparison between Australia and Europe. She is also undertaking comparative research on second-generation migrants in Australia and has published on this topic. Her policy interest is reflected in *Educational Planning for Cultural Diversity* (UNESCO 2007) and she is also co-writing a book on Chinese transnationalism in the twenty-first century for Hong Kong University Press. Email: c.inglis@usyd.edu.au

# **Harnessing Untapped Development Potential in the Asia-Pacific Island Region through the Mobility of Skilled Indian Workers**

BINOD KHADRIA

*Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi*

*Looking at the prospective migration of skilled Indian workers for development in the small island economies of the Asia-Pacific region, what is perhaps required is a microscopic perspective, not a telescopic one. The marginalised island economies call for a more in-depth exploration of the future possibilities towards deriving sustainable gains from skilled Indian movements in the region. Such an analysis could be based on an entirely novel premise of a proactive “migration for third-country development”. By providing a large supply of skilled professionals in the island economies of the Pacific, India can help raise the quality of education at all levels and improve access to basic educational and training facilities. Similarly, Pacific island countries might benefit from improved access to basic health facilities in remote rural communities, strengthened public health education, and improved access to safe water systems. These benefits would tend to improve the average productivity of labour in the Pacific in a cost-effective fashion. The movement of skilled Indian workers could create a win-win situation that also promotes regional cooperation. This paper provides a status report upon achieving such an objective.*

From the perspective of skilled Indian migration, historically a mature phenomenon, perhaps a telescopic view would suffice if one were looking at the migration of skilled Indian workers to the large or prosperous countries in the Asia-Pacific, as with the traditional immigration countries of the West (France, Germany, United Kingdom, United States and so on). However, a microscopic perspective is best deployed for examining small island economies. Keeping this in mind, one can classify the Asia-Pacific region in two categories:

(a) Developed countries such as Japan, Australia and New Zealand; the “tiger economies” (“NICs”) such as Taiwan, Republic of Korea, Hong Kong and Singapore; high-income tiny states such as Brunei and Singapore; the fast-developing large economies of Malaysia, Thailand and Indonesia; English-speaking countries such as Australia, New Zealand, Hong Kong and Singapore – in

short, all more prosperous than India and having significant gains of immigrant skilled workers;

(b) Other slow-developing economies of Indo-China such as the Lao PDR, Cambodia, Viet Nam – all less prosperous than India, mostly having significant losses of skilled workers; and, among these, a host of ill-researched and marginalised island economies of the Pacific.

All other countries excepting the “neglected” Pacific island nations in the above two categories can be surveyed and analysed using an “age-wage-vintage” framework, or the “necessary-and-sufficient conditionality” framework of “gainful” globalisation that I have suggested elsewhere for understanding the shifting paradigms in migration research (Khadria 2006a–2006e; Khadria and Leclerc 2006). However, the category of marginalised island economies calls for a different tool of investigation and analysis – a more in-depth exploration of the future possibilities of sustainable gains from skilled Indian movements in the region. In my “age-wage-vintage” framework, the idea has been to find out how India, as a “sending” country of skilled “knowledge workers”, can (a) *avert* workers being exploited for fulfilling the goals of optimising the age-structural change in population, their incomes and pensions, and knowledge accumulation that a high turnover of temporary and circulatory migration entails for the highly developed traditional receiving countries; whereas in the necessary-and-sufficient-conditionality framework, it was to (b) *derive* significant benefits that serve its own interests – economic, social and political.<sup>1</sup> Arguably, a more localised perspective is required if one is to understand the areas in which the small and stagnating *recipient economies* of the Pacific island countries could attract skilled Indian workers, and thus benefit from India’s involvement as a supplier. In other words, such an analysis could be based on an entirely novel premise of a proactive “emigration for development” perspective, albeit one discussed from an Indian point of view.

India has one of the world’s largest diasporas, next only to China’s in size. It is estimated that the approximately 20–25 million people of ethnic Indian origin (called “Persons of Indian Origin” or PIOs) and Indian citizens abroad (called “Non-Resident Indians” or NRIs) have an annual income of about US\$400 billion, which is equivalent to 80 per cent of income earned by the 1 billion Indians as India’s GDP (*Migration News*, October 2002). About half of the Indians overseas are first generation immigrants born in India, i.e. the NRIs (Khadria 2006b).<sup>2</sup> It is estimated that one million Indians in the United States, equivalent to 0.1 per cent of the total population living in India, earned the equivalent of 10 per cent of Indians’ national income in 2000 (*Migration News*, November 2002).

<sup>1</sup> Refer to my previous writings on the subject, Khadria (2004c, 2005, 2006a–2006d, 2007d).

<sup>2</sup> It was in the mid-1990s that the Indian Government officially began to distinguish between the PIOs and the NRIs. With the introduction of the Overseas Citizenship of India (OCI), a truncated form of dual citizenship in 2006, and the gradual movement towards fully fledged dual citizenship, there could be a virtual merger of the two categories over time.

### **1. Skilled Indians' Presence in the Asia-Pacific – Avoiding the Stereotypes**

The high-level Committee on Indian Diaspora (ICWA 2001) found that beginning as camel handlers and agricultural workers in the nineteenth century, Indian migrants in the twentieth century Asia-Pacific came to comprise a large number of professionals. Following the formal demise of the “White Australia Policy” in the early 1970s, engineers, doctors, accountants and (latterly) computer and software experts have found employment in Australia. Other, less-skilled Indians are found in the small- and medium-scale business sectors (examples of the former being restaurant workers and taxi drivers). The Indian community (PIOs and NRIs) is significant in numbers, mainly in Australia (190,000) and New Zealand (55,000). Of the 30,000 Indian citizens, about 10,000 are students in Australian Universities. There are PIO/NRI associations in almost all the major cities of Australia. New Zealand also witnessed a rise in immigration after changes in its Immigration Act. There, Indian immigrants are found in the domestic retail trade and in the medical, hospitality, engineering and Information Technology sectors. Recently, New Zealand has been pursuing the policy of wooing Indian students in large numbers. Secondary data suggests that the trends in stocks and flows of “knowledge workers” could be analysed in the framework of what I have categorised as the “embodied and disembodied” mobility of knowledge between India and Australasia – mainly Australia and New Zealand.<sup>3</sup> The Indian community in the Asia-Pacific region has mostly adapted itself well to local conditions in these countries and is regarded as a law-abiding, educated and responsible community.

This summary, however, does not provide an insight upon Indian migration to the small island countries in the Asia-Pacific, particularly those in the Pacific Ocean. There is paucity of information pertaining to the latter and, even if some information is available, there is a lack of awareness upon the subject of Indian labour migration. The great increase of government services in these nations after the Second World War witnessed the construction of more schools, hospitals and other public utilities (Crocombe 2004: 21). In the British Pacific colonies, most technicians were Indians coming from Fiji. When all British colonies came under the jurisdiction of the Governor of Fiji, from the 1950s to the 1970s many semi-skilled Indian workers such as carpenters, bricklayers, painters, plumbers, mechanics and other artisans worked on various projects in Solomon Islands, Vanuatu, Tonga and Gilbert Islands (presently the Republic of Kiribati). Highly skilled Indians such as aircraft pilots and engineers, air traffic controllers and others, including staff of the petroleum companies, were also Fiji-Indians. However, after the independence of Solomon Islands in 1978 and Vanuatu in 1980, extensions of work permits were denied, and the fresh entry of Indians was also restricted. Only those who had married locally were allowed to remain and take citizenship in the newly independent nations. As work contracts expired, settler Indians set up their own businesses and became self-employed.

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<sup>3</sup> See Khadria (2006a) for this discussion.



In Papua New Guinea (PNG), Australia provided significant resources in education and other services during the 1960s and 1970s. Advertisements for staff were placed in Australia, the UK, New Zealand and other selected places. Not only Indians in the UK, but from British colonies in Africa and the Caribbean, as well as Indians from India applied. But the Australian Government did not encourage them. A dispute between the University of Papua New Guinea and the Australian Government finally led to the appointment of the first Indian academic in 1968. By 1970s, more Indians joined, increasingly after independence of PNG in 1975.

Secondly, various UN agencies, such as the WHO and the UNDP, the World Bank, and the Asian Development Bank posted Indian consultants in the region (coming from India and elsewhere). The Commonwealth Fund for Technical Cooperation has at various times also sent experts from India, in rural technology and other fields. However, these numbers and their proportions have been small and marginal.

The experiences for the Indian people in the Pacific islands nations have been varied. Apart from the University of Papua New Guinea, the region's first university established in 1966, the PNG University of Technology and some technical colleges employed some Indian faculty members – mostly those who came from the UK or from the Indian diaspora elsewhere, rather than those coming from India – the so-called “double-displaced” (Lal 2006). About 20 per cent were married to Europeans and some to other races, and so they were culturally assimilated in non-Indian societies. Most had degrees from British universities and, in fact, this was one common bond or identity that united the Indians in PNG (Premdas 1981: 68). Other Indians joined the civil service and a few worked for private firms. Probably more than in any other Pacific country, Indian migrants in PNG have been almost exclusively skilled professionals.

Indian faculty members at the University of Guam comprised Indian students completing their degrees in mainland USA and then seeking jobs within the American university system in this American-territory island (Kallingal 1981). Indians coming to Samoa in the 1970s were also mainly professionals. The majority of these were Kerala Christians, which made it easier for them to be accepted. The main Protestant Church in Samoa recruited a substantial number of them as teachers for the high schools and the small university in the island.

The Republic of Nauru was probably the only other country of the region to *recruit directly from India*. Those recruited between 1970s and the 1990s included medical, judicial, educational, administrative and other government staff. Although the numbers were small, they included some positions at very senior level, such as chief secretary and secretary to the cabinet.

Among Pacific regional organisations, a marked difference is visible between those where the top posts are directly controlled by the member governments and those lower down that are not. In the former, Fiji Indians are under-represented owing to

resistance from member governments. At the University of the South Pacific, established in 1968, staffing decisions are internal and largely made by disproportionately predominant Indian staff members, who are thus much over-represented in employment, consultancies, training opportunities and other benefits.

Apart from Fiji, skilled professional workers from India have thus been predominant in PNG, Samoa, Nauru and Guam: as academics at the University of PNG, for example, and providing expertise in the medical and judicial sectors, as consultants to various international institutions, including agencies of the UN, the World Bank and the Asian Development Bank (Lal 2006). While cultural assimilation with the local population has remained at a minimum, economic and social accomplishments of Indians have not been insignificant in the Pacific Island countries. Indians, with large numbers coming from the Indian diaspora in other countries of the world, thus play a crucial role in the development of the Pacific Islands, but their declining numbers indicate the need to adopt a novel approach to skilled Indian migration, one that I have suggested elsewhere as an initiative for “third-country development” (Khadria 2007a).

## **2. Migration and the State of the Island Pacific**

Recent analyses (e.g. Dumont and Lemaitre 2005) have confirmed that emigration rates in less developed countries of Asia are higher for skilled groups and that many Asian countries experience a significant brain drain (Hugo 2005). Moreover, in recent times OECD nations have placed greater emphasis on skill in their selection of immigrants, exacerbating skilled labour shortages amid increasing global competition for the same.<sup>4</sup> A recent comprehensive analysis by the OECD (Dumont and Lemaitre 2005), based on data collected from 227 sending nations and 29 OECD receiving nations, calculated emigration rates of all highly qualified personnel (with a university education) for non-OECD nations. The rates were found to be low for large nations such as Indonesia (1.9 per cent), Thailand (1.9 per cent) Bangladesh (2.0 per cent), India (3.1 per cent) and China (3.2 per cent). In sharp contrast, for small nations of the Pacific, though the relative numbers of personnel are small, very high proportions are detrimental to national development.

Typologically, some classify Pacific Island countries into four categories: (1) large resource rich countries such as PNG, Fiji, Solomon Island, New Caledonian and Vanuatu; (2) middle-level countries such as Western Samoa and Tonga; (3) poor countries such as Kiribati, Tuvalu, Niue, Tokelau, Cook Islands; and (4) “specially advantaged” countries with high living standards but poor prospects: Nauru, Guam, Palau, American Samoa. The Pacific islands were the last in the world to be populated and colonised, and the last to be decolonised and become independent: Western Samoa in 1962 and Vanuatu in 1980. New Caledonia is still a French territory. The post-independence establishment of a national bureaucratic

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<sup>4</sup> See Khadria (2006e) on the political economy of such recruitments.

bourgeoisie contributed to substantial rural-urban migration. Compared with other developing countries, Pacific Island countries have made notable progress in education, health and related social services: low infant mortality rates (with 23:1,000 births in Tonga), high primary-school enrolment rates, and near universal adult literacy have been attained, and life expectancy is in the high 60s. However, there are variations across the region, which is subdivided as Melanesia, Micronesia and Polynesia.<sup>5</sup>

### *2.1. Population age structure and the skill gap*

Regional cooperation is well developed in the South Pacific, e.g. the South Pacific Forum and the South Pacific Commission provide institutions for political, economic, social and cultural cooperation. The region is among the highest per capita aid recipients in the world. While trading channels with traditional partners such as Australia, New Zealand and France are well established, economic relations with the Asia-Pacific rim countries have been limited. Shortages of basic factor inputs, particularly development capital and skilled labour hamper development efforts. Shortages of highly skilled labour are a result of poor education and training in the past and, in several cases, loss of skills through emigration. The “skills gap” is filled by foreign experts, ill-experienced for the island economies.

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<sup>5</sup> “Melanesia” comprises Vanuatu, Solomon Islands, Papua New Guinea and Fiji. Micronesia is divided between eight territories: the Federated States of Micronesia (sometimes referred to simply as “Micronesia”, or alternatively abbreviated “FSM” – comprising four states: Kosrae, Yap, Pohnpei, Chuuk); Republic of the Marshall Islands; Republic of Palau; Commonwealth of the Northern Mariana Islands; Republic of Nauru; Republic of Kiribati; Territory of Guam; Territory of Wake Island.

“Polynesia” is a large grouping of over 1,000 islands scattered over the central and southern Pacific Ocean. The following are the islands and island groups, either nations or subnational territories that are of native Polynesian culture. Note that some islands of Polynesian origin are outside the general triangle that geographically defines the region: American Samoa (overseas United States territory); Anuta (in Solomon Islands); Cook Islands (self-governing state in free association with New Zealand); Easter Island (part of Chile, called *Rapa Nui* in Rapa Nui); Emae (in Vanuatu); French Polynesia (territory of France); Hawaii (state of the USA); Kapingamarangi (in Federated States of Micronesia); Loyalty Islands (dependency of French territory of New Caledonia); Mele (in Vanuatu); New Zealand (called *Aotearoa* in Māori, usually associated with Australasia); Niue (self-governing state in free association with New Zealand); Nuguria (in Papua New Guinea); Nukumanu (in Papua New Guinea); Nukuoro (in Federated States of Micronesia); Ontong Java (in Solomon Islands); Pileni (in Solomon Islands); Rennell (in Solomon Islands); Samoa (independent nation); Sikaiana (in Solomon Islands); Swains Island (politically part of American Samoa); Takuu (in Papua New Guinea); Tikopia (in Solomon Islands); Tokelau (overseas dependency of New Zealand); Tonga (independent nation); Tuvalu (independent nation); Wallis and Futuna (overseas territory of France). This region of Oceania consists of many hundreds of small islands spread over a large region of the Western Pacific.

**Table 1:** Pacific Island People in New Zealand and in their Island “Homes” (mid-1990s)

<b>Polynesian population</b>	<b>In New Zealand</b>	<b>In island “home”</b>
Samoan	101 700	171 000
Cook Islanders	47 000	19 000
Tongan	31 400	97 800
Niuean	18 500	2 000
Tokelauan	5 000	1 000
<b>Total</b>	<b>203 600</b>	<b>290 800</b>

*Source:* Bedford (2002).

There were two distinct periods of population change in the Island Pacific during the twentieth century – before and after 1950 (Bedford 2002).<sup>6</sup> Growth was particularly significant during the second half of the century. In the 1950s and 1960s sustained emigration from Polynesia to New Zealand began and at the time this was seen to be an essential safety-valve for small island groups experiencing rapid population growth (Cumberland 1962; McArthur 1964). However, Polynesian migration to New Zealand since the 1960s has produced a situation where there are two-and-a-half times as many Cook Island Maoris, five times as many Tokelauans, and nine times as many Niueans in New Zealand as there are in the island countries (see Table 1).

As a consequence, for several island countries overseas employment is a major source of income and foreign exchange: Western Samoa (US\$50 million), Tonga (US\$40 million), Cook Islands, and Niue receive remittances from New Zealand, the United States and Australia – remittances being higher than export earnings. Kiribati, Tuvalu and Vanuatu receive earnings from employment on foreign merchant shipping, and some people from Vanuatu are also employed on foreign fishing vessels, whereas Kiribati nationals run phosphate operations in Nauru. As the paradigm of international migration has shifted from being supply-determined to demand-determined there has been a transition in the destination for the Pacific Islanders too – from New Zealand to Australia and the USA. However, the vulnerability is that, at any time, New Zealand, the USA, or Australia may choose

<sup>6</sup> At the end of the twentieth century, the population of the region, including Australia and New Zealand, was four times larger than it had been in 1900 (Bedford 2002).

to restrict immigration from the Pacific Islands. Any such action, of course, would have severe and immediate consequences for the economies of the home countries.

## *2.2. Remittances*

Remittances form a significant part of development capital in a number of island states (Western Samoa, Tonga, even smaller states such as the Cook Islands, Kiribati and Tuvalu), so much so that these have been characterised as “MIRAB economies”, where migration, remittances, aid, and the resultant bureaucracy are seen as central to respective socio-economic systems. The national development plans of Samoa, for example, depend on remittances. Remittances from Polynesian populations in New Zealand, Australia and the United States contribute more to the domestic economies of the Cook Island, Niue, Samoa and Tonga than all the local sources of cash income combined (Bedford 2002).

Migrants from this region rely heavily on remittances. Remittances are a material demonstration of kinship ties back home, leading to what is called the “Pacific Kinship Bridge”. Islander migration is thus an aspect of personal and kin related aid, and not simply a benefit for the individual settler and his or her immediate family. Remittances are used in financing migration of kin, paying debts, buying consumer goods, housing, etc., which reinforce a traditional set of values and reinforces traditional structures of social organisation. Remittances go to senior family members, leading to discouragement of structural changes. Migrants retain land rights back home. Some Pacific Islander families are becoming “transnational communities” of kin in the sense that families spread their human resources over a very wide area and thus benefit from a diversity of sources of remittances.

In New Zealand, less than half of the resident ethnic Pacific people were born in the islands; the younger population is very much dominated by the second and third generation born in New Zealand. There is considerable concern about the extent to which remittance flows to the islands will continue as the New Zealand-born Pacific people develop different senses of identity over time (McPherson 1997). The situation is considered unsatisfactory, because the heavy dependence on external savings leaves them vulnerable to the uncertainties of outside forces while the phenomenon of donor fatigue is also becoming increasingly apparent. Therefore, domestic savings are important. Vigorous efforts are needed to strengthen the human resources which are universally recognised as being the sole foundation of sustainable growth in the region. Educational selectivity by the receiving countries has contributed to a brain drain and skill drain, which may not be compensated by remittances.

## *2.3. Return migration*

International migration from countries in the Pacific has not played any major positive role in the development of the region’s population and economy. However, the movement of people for tertiary and vocational training overseas has

been important for the development of human capital. For many years, both New Zealand and Australia have offered scholarships for Pacific people as part of their overseas development assistance (Bedford 2002). However, many of these people have eventually gone back to New Zealand and Australia, especially in recent years following political upheaval and tensions in several countries including PNG, Solomon Islands, Vanuatu and Fiji.

The relative permanency of emigration has reduced the positive impact of return migration. Return migration is low due to great differences in wages and salary levels at home and abroad. As a result, the island countries of the Cook Islands, Niue and Samoa all suffer from shortages of labour both in their rural as well as urban economies. This has been a persistent problem for development planners in those parts of Polynesia that have sent large numbers of people abroad, now living as communities in the cities of New Zealand, Australia and the United States. Although there is often an expressed intention on the part of the Pacific migrants living overseas to return to their homeland (indeed, this is one of the explanations for remitting money and goods to the relatives back in the islands), the reality of return is much less certain (Connell and Brown 1995). Many migrants do wish to return home, although this intention is often borne of nostalgia for the past rather than a real plan for the future. Those who do return are often older, retired, or unsuccessful migrants. There is some indication that the advantages from international migration are greater in the context of short-term or seasonal migration, since the financial benefits associated with returning migrants are directly transferred to the rural sector.

### **3. India's Engagement in the Pacific Island Countries**

The Pacific is of growing significance for India; the latter's striking economic growth and stature in world affairs mean that its significance to the Pacific Island nations is also growing. India's remarkable achievements in the area of information and communications technology offer potential for cooperation in many areas. Regional projects might be set up to benefit a group of countries in the Pacific (Pardeshi 2004: 130). In recent years, people-to-people contacts have flourished with Australia and New Zealand – thanks to educational tourism and, of late, films. Greater awareness of island countries might be achieved through frequent visits of businesspeople, cultural troupes, scholars, media personalities, cultural exhibitions, etc.

However, trade between India and the Pacific has been minimal (Crocombe 2004). Even with Fiji, trade has been small. Preferential trading arrangements existed between the colonial powers and their colonies, but their potentialities were not realised. The Pacific produced raw materials that India produced itself or could buy more cheaply and conveniently elsewhere. The industrial products which the Pacific Island nations imported were more conveniently obtainable from the Pacific Rim – especially from Australia and New Zealand, the USA and increasingly from Japan and China. This situation can change as India makes further strides towards

industrialisation and its products become better known in the region. Pharmaceuticals, vehicles, and equipment – even tourism – are areas in which India has a considerable potential for growth. As a *quid pro quo*, India has a long-term interest in Pacific fish and seabed minerals.

Diplomatic relations between India and the independent nations of the Pacific were firmly established from the 1990s. However, the only two countries with resident high commissioners are Fiji (which is also accredited to Tonga, Tuvalu and the Cook Islands), and PNG (which is also accredited to the Solomon Islands and Vanuatu). Other countries are accredited through Indian High Commissions and Embassies in Australia (Nauru) and New Zealand (Samoa and Kiribati), Philippines (Palau and the Marshall Islands), or Japan (the Federated States of Micronesia). Part of the reason for such decentralisation is the fear that accreditation from the Indian High Commission in Fiji would accentuate suspicion of India's support for non-indigenous interests in that nation.

India and the Pacific Island governments belong to an ever widening range of international organisations, including the many Asia-Pacific regional entities of world organisations, the Asian Development Bank, the World Bank, Asia-Pacific Security Conferences, and many others. In 2001, India became a Dialogue Partner (along with other major nations with interests in the region) of the Pacific Islands Forum of Heads of Governments. India's "Look East" policy, while mainly aimed at the ASEAN and northeast Asia, includes the Pacific Islands nations. Likewise, the "Look North" policy of the Pacific Island nations (only some of which state this overtly, but all of which are now practising it in varying degrees), is aimed mainly at north-east Asia, but tangentially includes South Asia, of which India is by far the most important country.

Apart from Fiji, relations between India and Pacific Island nations generally have been cordial but superficial, and covertly cautious even when overtly exuberant. Each entity is a minor concern for the other. With Fiji relations have been more complex and, especially after the coups of 1987 and 2000, often strained. In addition, other Pacific governments tend to take their cue on relations with India from the Fijians. Aid from the Indian governments, by comparison with that from Australia, Japan, Europe and New Zealand, has been small, mainly taking the form of scholarships for short courses in medicine, statistics, broadcasting, youth training and so on. Scholarships to anywhere are welcome, but those to India have been less popular than most others, and the experiences of those who took up these scholarships have been discouraging due to differences of diet, religion, culture and so forth. Substantial and realistic rethinking is needed if such programmes are to be of maximum mutual benefit to the donors and recipients. Why should then India spend time and resources on relations with the Pacific? One reason is that regions are becoming ever more important in world intergovernmental relations, and India and the Pacific Islands are both part of the Asia-Pacific region. The potentials for improved relations between Indians and Pacific Islanders, and between the

governments of India and the Pacific Island nations are positive. However, one has to ask what and how the Indian professionals could contribute in this.

#### **4. Future Prospects and Potentials**

In the history of modern civilisation, globalisation of human capital has been a much older phenomenon than globalisation of either finance capital or physical capital (Khadria 1999; 2007c). However, it is the latter two that have received precedence in the current, twenty-first century deliberations on free-market globalisation. This is primarily because the migration of “knowledge workers”, who are in effect far more mobile globally than either finance or physical capital, has been kept clubbed with labour and hence isolated from the *process of embodiment* of skills, through investment in education and training as human capital. In other words, the greater mobility of the “knowledge workers” (the skilled professionals), as opposed to that of the “service workers” (the unskilled and semi-skilled labour), across sovereign borders through international migration can be understood as the subtle globalisation of skills, education and knowledge, whether embodied or disembodied. The disembodied globalisation of skills, education and knowledge, which is more directly visible with the mobility of tertiary level students between countries, can thus be seen as mobility of skills.

The broad trends about globalisation of skills that seem to be emerging are thus (a) migration of knowledge workers from developing to developed countries, and (b) migration of educational services from developed to developing countries. Currently, these trends mostly obscure a dynamic (as opposed to static) hegemony of the developed countries over the accumulation of world stocks and flows of knowledge. The already formed human capital (highly educated workers) and “semi-finished” human capital<sup>7</sup> (students pursuing higher education) is transferred to developed labour markets *at a profit*; similarly, the education (particularly the higher education) of developing country students (whether overseas or in their home countries) is being oriented as relatively *inexpensive* element of the *long-term* requirements of developed labour markets.

India potentially can subvert developed countries with such an agenda. By providing access to its large supply of skilled professionals, India can assist the island economies of the Pacific raise education levels, and improve access to basic educational and training facilities, including technical and vocational training. The quality of teaching might also be enhanced by, for instance, encouraging the 2006 Nobel Prize-winning *Grameen Bank* style unsecured micro-credit against “socialcollaterals” of trust, time and loyalty (Khadria 2007b). India might offer India-Pacific scholarships, by way of the Pacific Islands Forum, for the pursuit of higher studies in India. Visiting professors of Indian Studies could be sent to the Pacific. Similarly, visiting scholars on Pacific studies could be welcomed by Indian universities. It may be worthwhile to set up chairs of Pacific studies at prominent

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<sup>7</sup> The term “semi-finished” human capital was coined by Majumdar (1994).



Indian universities – an area the Indian academic community has devoted little attention (Pardeshi 2004). Similarly, by improving access to basic health facilities in remote rural communities, strengthening public health education, and providing improved access to safe water systems, collaborations could be geared towards benefiting the Pacific Island countries. The formation of human capital by way of improving the average productivity of labour in the Pacific could be achieved more cost-effectively by India than many other developed countries. The movement of skilled Indian workers might thus provide a cornerstone of sustainable development in the Asia-Pacific island region, enhancing regional cooperation in the long run.

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### About the Author

Binod Khadria teaches graduate courses in economics of education at the Zakir Husain Centre for Educational Studies, School of Social Sciences, Jawaharlal Nehru University, New Delhi (India). He is the author of *The Migration of Knowledge Workers* (1999). His other research works on migration have been published by the ILO, OECD, GCIM, IRD (France), ISDE-JETRO (Japan), IPPR (UK), *Harvard International Review* (USA), *Health Services Research* (USA), ZiF (Germany), ARI (Singapore), ISAS (Singapore), and in volumes edited by eminent scholars. He holds nominated positions on a number of professional bodies including the Editorial Board of the *Asian and Pacific Migration Journal* (APMJ). Email: bkhadria@mail.jnu.ac.in

# Indonesian Labour Migration: Issues and Challenges

ASWATINI RAHARTO

*Historically, Indonesian labour migration to other countries has been taking place since the Dutch and Japanese colonial periods, in unregulated as well as government-regulated movements. After Indonesia gained its independence in 1945, labour migration from the country continued as a spontaneous movement. In 1977 the Indonesian Government announced regulations to recruit Indonesians to work overseas, and in 1979 started to encourage the sending of international migrant workers overseas. This paper examines issues on international labour migration from Indonesia. It is argued that even though Indonesia is one of the most important labour-exporting countries in Southeast Asia, it is still facing major problems in benefiting from globalisation and a deregulated global labour market. Most Indonesian workers deployed overseas are uneducated and unskilled. Indonesia is also still facing problems in controlling irregular labour migrants and protecting its migrant workers.*

The international migration phenomenon is important as every country, whether sender or receiver, will experience its impact. One type of international migration involves the movement of labour between two countries; a natural reaction to economic and structural differences between sending and receiving countries with one important factor being demographic change. In general, labour-sending countries are characterised by high rates of population and labour-force growth while, due to fertility declines and accelerated economic development, receiving countries experience serious labour shortages. Aging also adds to the comparatively low labour-force growth in these countries. International labour movement is also promoted by globalisation, which has made migration much easier through better communications, dissemination of information and improved transportation. On the other hand, globalisation has increased economic disparities between nations that encourage people from poor countries to look for work abroad (Wickramasekara 2002: 10).

Indonesia is regarded as an important labour-sending country in Southeast Asia. Indonesian labour migration has been in evidence since the Dutch colonial period and has been characterised by unregulated as well as government-regulated forms. Unregulated labour migration of Javanese to Malaysia and Singapore was an important form of migration in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

Indonesian migrants were employed as rubber estate labourers in Malaysia, or as labourers in infrastructural projects in Singapore (Spaan 1994). During the Dutch colonial period, the Dutch Government regulated labour movements under contract coolie recruitment programmes. Under these programmes thousands of Javanese coolies were sent to newly opened plantation areas in Sumatra and Kalimantan (Borneo), the Dutch colonies of Suriname and New Caledonia, British colonies in Malaysia, and to French colonies in the Asian region (Hugo 1980; Adam 1994).

During the Japanese occupation of Indonesia, mobilisation of Javanese labour was continued and known as *romusha*. These workers were deployed on construction and railway track projects in Thailand and Burma (Hugo 1980: 117; Adam 1994: 1). In addition to Javanese labour, the Japanese Government also recruited *romusha* from South Sulawesi and East Nusa Tenggara (East Flores) to be employed in Sabah, Malaysia (Raharto et al. 1999: 97).

After Indonesia gained independence in 1945, labour migration continued as a spontaneous movement. In 1970 the Indonesian Government announced regulations to administer overseas labour recruitment (Ministry of Manpower, Regulation No. 4, 1970, cited Anon. 1986). However, it was not until 1977 that the government announced detailed regulations pertaining to labour recruitment, and in 1979 actively encouraged the sending of labour migrants overseas.

This paper examines the phenomenon of international labour migration from Indonesia, including significant trends, the importance of the movement, the qualifications of Indonesian migrant workers, and the issues of illegal migrants and protection for migrant workers. Some cases studies from receiving countries such as Malaysia, Singapore and Brunei Darussalam will be provided as empirical evidence.

## **1. Flows and Trends in International Labour Migration from Indonesia**

The purpose of sending labour to work overseas, as stated in the 1993 *Guidelines of State Policy* (Garis-garis Besar Haluan Negara/GBHN) (Amicun 1994) were: (a) to evenly distribute employment opportunities; (b) to extend employment opportunities; (c) to provide foreign exchange revenue. This policy guided the design of subsequent programmes and regulations related to the recruitment and placement of Indonesian migrant workers overseas. Two streams of international labour migration from Indonesia, official and unofficial, now exist. Official international labour migrants are those deployed by formal institutions and follow formal procedures announced by the Indonesian Government. Migrant workers who depart through other institutions and outside of these formal procedures are considered unofficial or illegal.

**Table 1:** Number and Sex Ratio of Documented Indonesian Labour Deployed Overseas (1995–2005), by Destination Region

Year	Region of Destination									
	Asia Pacific		Middle East and Africa		America		Europe		All Destination Regions	
	Total	Sex ratio	Total	Sex ratio	Total	Sex ratio	Total	Sex ratio	Total	Sex ratio
1995	68,436	74	47,518	13	3,483	28,925	1,166	8,229	120,603	48
1996	95,070	45	122,563	7	1,761	-	768	2,643	220,162	22
1997	375,317	136	126,328	7	736	-	597	59,800	502,978	82
1998	196,344	42	167,574	8	2,191	109,450	1,114	9,183	367,223	25
1999	267,768	64	154,636	11	3,519	23,360	1,696	2,824	427,619	41
2000	304,186	70	129,165	10	1,509	150,800	359	360	435,219	46
2001	217,555	35	121,180	9	228	7,500	29	480	338,992	24
2002	238,324	70	241,961	8	40	471.4	68	106	480,393	32
2003	109,722	147	183,770	9	171	533.3	31	94	293,694	38
2004	160,970	74	219,699	8	17	1,700	4	300	380,690	28
2005	297,291	86	177,019	7	n.a		n.a		n.a	
1995 to 2005	2,330,983	79	1,691,413	12	-	-	-	-	-	-

Notes: Sex ratio: males per 100 females.

Sources: Data for 1995 to 2000, unpublished data from the Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration, cited in Soeprono (2004). Data for 2001 to 2005, Depnakertrans (2006a).

Until the end of 1970, Malaysia and Singapore remained the main countries of destination for most migrant workers from Indonesia, predominantly undocumented or illegal movement. The economic boom experienced by these receiving countries expanded the labour market for migrant workers in manufacturing, construction and estate sectors, as well as domestic service sectors (Spaan 1994). In the 1980s and early 1990s one country in the Middle East region, Saudi Arabia, became the main destination of migrant workers from Indonesia (Ford n.d.: 7; Hugo 2002: 2). Increased numbers of Indonesian migrant workers working in the Middle East elevated Indonesia to being one of the most important labour-exporting countries in Southeast Asia. However, the majority of Indonesian migrant workers can only enter the domestic service sector, mainly constituted by female migrant workers. Compared to the Philippines and Thailand or other Asian countries such as India, Pakistan, Bangladesh and Sri Lanka, Indonesia is a latecomer to the Middle Eastern migrant labour market. Employment in the domestic service sector was prohibited by labour-sending countries such as Bangladesh and Pakistan. The Philippines Government also has limited domestic worker deployment abroad due to serious problems in labour migrant protection (Cremer 1988: 74).

It is estimated that in 2005 about 2.3 million Indonesians worked abroad (ILO 2007: 50). Data in Table 1 show that there was a significant increase in the number of official Indonesian labourers deployed overseas from 1995 to 2005. However, there was no obvious pattern in the increase. The data also show that Indonesian migrant workers deployed in the Asia Pacific region outnumbered those deployed in the Middle East and Africa regions. The migration flow to the Middle East and Africa was dominated by females, and among migrant workers to the Asia Pacific region, about 79 males compared with every 100 female migrants. More than 65 per cent of Indonesian labour deployed in the Asia Pacific region during the last five years (2001 to 2005) worked in Malaysia, followed by Singapore and Hong Kong. Females were dominant in the labour migration stream to Singapore and Brunei Darussalam, while male migrant workers outnumbered females in Malaysia (Table 2). The number of migrant workers deployed every year also fluctuated.

The number of male Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia almost doubled from 2001 to 2002, while the number of females decreased slightly (Table 2). In 2002, the Malaysian Government deported hundreds of thousands of Indonesian migrant workers who could be considered as illegal labour migrants under certain conditions. Most of these returned workers did not go back to their villages of origin, but entered Malaysia again after obtaining the documentation they needed to work there officially. This could explain the increase in official male Indonesian migrant workers to Malaysia in 2002. Unlike males, females are more likely to return to their villages after they are deported from Malaysia. It is also possible that the majority of Indonesian migrant workers deported to Nunukan in 2002 were

**Table 2:** Number of Indonesian Labourers by Sex Deployed to Three Major Destination Countries in the Asia Pacific Region (2001–05)

Years	Country of destination							
	Malaysia		Singapore		Brunei Darussalam		Total	
	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female	Male	Female
								M + F
2001	44,260	66,230	3,397	30,898	1,582	4,191	49,239	101,319
2002	87,566	65,114	80	15,991	3,088	5,414	90,734	86,519
2003	57,034	32,405	5	6,098	388	758	57,427	39,261
2004	62,658	64,517	33	9,098	2,515	3,988	65,206	77,603
2005	126,706	75,181	-	25,087	2,412	2,566	129,118	102,834
Total	378,224	303,447	3,515	87,172	9,985	16,917	391,724	407,536

Source: Depnakertrans (2006a).



males. This also may indicate that males are more likely to work illegally in Malaysia compared to females who mostly work as domestic workers.<sup>1</sup>

After the mass deportation in 2002 the Indonesian Government made some attempt to improve the system and processing of sending migrant workers overseas. Some positive steps that have been taken include an improvement in the recruitment process and funding mechanism, the education of migrants, and the establishment of some systems for migrant workers' protection (Ford n.d.: 11). These reforms may also have tended to delay Indonesian migrant workers deployment in 2003. In following years the number of Indonesian migrant workers, both male and female, deployed to Malaysia increased.

In Singapore, the number of Indonesian migrant workers deployed between 2001 and 2005 decreased in successive years, most obviously among males (Table 2). The Singaporean Government attempted to reduce the country's reliance on foreign labour by urging employers in manufacturing to resort to automation and redistribute labour intensive production to neighbouring countries, including Indonesia. Therefore, even though Singapore experienced labour shortages in the manufacturing and construction sectors, not many employment opportunities opened up in these two sectors that mostly employed male Indonesian migrant workers. In addition, Malaysian labour had already fulfilled labour needs in this sector, limiting the opportunities available to Indonesian migrant workers (Spaan 1994: 97). However, Indonesia still managed to find a niche in the expanding Singaporean labour market for (predominantly) female domestic workers. Therefore, the number of migrant Indonesian female workers was quite high compared to their male counterparts.

The number of male Indonesian migrant workers deployed in Brunei Darussalam is higher than that deployed in Singapore. This is probably related to declining employment opportunities in Singapore meaning that Indonesian workers shifted their job hunting efforts to Brunei Darussalam. However, the employment opportunities available to women are still higher than that for male migrant workers. The number of Indonesian migrant workers deployed in Brunei Darussalam also increased between 2001 and 2002, and decreased between 2002 and 2003, similarly to the trend evident in Malaysia.

Data in Table 2 also show that the total number of female migrant workers deployed overseas in 2001 to 2005 in the three countries under investigation is higher than males. In the past, the involvement of females in Indonesian international labour migration was neglected as female migration was considered as part of male migration, and did not have an important role in migration decision making. However, during the last decade there has been a substantial increase in Indonesian female involvement in international labour migration (Hugo 2000: 5).

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<sup>1</sup> Nunukan is a city located in Nunukan Island (West Kalimantan Province) known as a transit area for Indonesian labour migrants from areas as North Sulawesi, West Nusa Tenggara, East Nusa Tenggara and West Java, who intend to work in Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam.

This phenomenon can be seen as a reflection of the enormous economic and social changes evident in Indonesia, and the increased scale, complexity and significance of female social mobility in Indonesia.

The Indonesian Government is still facing problems in expanding employment opportunities for its growing labour force, meaning that the globalisation process will impact upon increasing flows of Indonesian labour working abroad. Indonesia is still an important labour-sending country to the Asia Pacific, indicated by an increase in labour deployment abroad in 2005, following the decline instanced by the huge deportation of Indonesian migrant workers from Malaysia in 2002. As employment abroad is one strategy that can assist solving local unemployment and underemployment problems, the Indonesian Government faces the challenge of improving the management of overseas labour deployment.

## **2. Importance and Economic Contribution of International Labour Migration**

Indonesia's population, based on the 2000 Population Census is about 201 million (Badan Pusat Statistik 2001). From 2000 to 2005 the economically active population (aged 15 years and over) increased by 2.02 per cent annually but employment only increased about 1.1 per cent, while the unemployment rate increased about 12.5 per cent (Table 3). Therefore, Indonesia is facing considerable problems in providing employment for its growing economically active population. Deploying migrant workers to high demand countries is one possible means by which the Indonesian unemployment rate might be tempered, while simultaneously boosting foreign exchange earnings.

The proportion of Indonesian labour officially (or documented) deployed overseas has been relatively insignificant in reducing the national unemployment rate. In 2000, its contribution was about 7.5 per cent which reduced successively to 2.4 per cent in 2004. However, a study conducted by the Research Centre for Population and Manpower Studies – Indonesian Institute of Sciences (PPT-LIPI) in East Flores (East Nusa Tenggara Province) in 1996 found that 74 per cent of returned migrants stated that lack of employment opportunities in their villages had pushed them to look for jobs abroad. Almost all households in the study area had at least one family member working as a labour migrant in Malaysia (Raharto et al. 1999: 102).

The economic contribution of Indonesian migrant workers abroad can be predicted from the remittances they send back to their home villages. In 2005, countries in the Middle East and Africa accounted for about 63.3 per cent of the total remittances, while the share from countries in the Asia Pacific was about 36.6 per cent. Most of the remittances (about 71 per cent) came from migrant workers who worked in the informal sector (Table 4).

**Table 3:** Population and Labour, Indonesia (2000–2005)

Population and Type of activity	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	Rate of growth 2000-05 (%)
Population (millions)	201.242 <sup>1</sup>	207.927 <sup>2</sup>	212.003	215.276	217.854	219.205	1.71
Economically active <sup>3</sup> (millions)	95.650	98.812	100.779	100.316	103.973	105.802	2.02
Working (millions)	89.838	90.807	91.647	90.785	93.722	94.948	1.11
Unemployment (millions)	5.813	8.005	9.132	9.531	10.251	10.854	12.49
Unemployment rate <sup>4</sup>	6.08	8.10	9.06	9.50	9.86	10.25	-
Indonesian documented labourers deployed overseas to unemployment (%)	7.5	4.2	5.3	3.1	2.4	4.37 <sup>5</sup>	-

Notes: 1) Result of the 2000 Population Census. 2) Result of Indonesian Population Projection 2000-2005. 3) Population aged 15 years and over.

4) Percentage of unemployed population to economically active population. 5) Only migrant workers deployed to Asia Pacific and Middle East regions.

Sources: Badan Pusat Statistik, 2000, 2001, 2002, 2003, 2004, 2005-06; Statistical Yearbook of Indonesia; Badan Pusat Statistik, 2001a; Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan nasional, Badan Pusat Statistik; United Nations Population Fund, 2005.

At the national level, the deployment of Indonesian labour overseas cannot be considered as having a significant economic or social impact compared to foreign exchange earnings from other sectors. The loss of foreign exchange due to the payment for foreign labour working in Indonesia also needs to be considered. However, remittances are important in the local economic context.

For example, the Tulung Agung District in East Java Province, an important source of Indonesian migrant workers to Malaysia with approximately 20,000 of its population working overseas, received remittances of about Rp.50 billion in 2005, compared to about Rp.31 billion from the development budget and earnings at the provincial level in 2006 (*Republika* 19 October 2006). All those remittances were sent formally by bank transfer enabling detection. The actual amount of remittances sent back home by Indonesian migrant workers overseas may be higher when taking into consideration remittances made through friends, relatives, or workers who bring the money back themselves. It is also likely that some migrant workers bring back goods (especially gold) rather than cash.

**Table 4:** Indonesian Foreign Exchange Earnings from Migrant Workers by Region of Destination and Employment Sector (2005)

Region of destination	Employment sector and foreign exchange earnings (US\$)		
	Formal	Informal	Total
Asia Pacific	366 196 788	706 859 946	1073 056 734
Middle East and Africa	493 867 342	1363 270 922	1857 138 264
America	461 845	138 127	599 972
Europe	121 549	–	121 549
Total	860 647 524	2070 268 995	2930 916 519

*Note:* Data for January to December 2005.

*Source:* Pusat Data dan Informasi Ketenagakerjaan. Badan Penelitian, Pengembangan dan Informasi. Depnakertrans (2006).

A study conducted by Research Centre for Population-Indonesian Institute of Sciences (PPK-LIPI) in West Java, East Kalimantan and Riau provinces showed that remittances sent by migrant workers also have a significant impact on the economic conditions of their families. In general, money from remittances is used to build or renovate houses, to buy rice fields (*sawah*), as capital for running family businesses, to pay for the children's education, and to fulfil the family's basic daily needs. Building and renovating houses also helps to create employment for local people who work as construction workers (Raharto et al. 2002). The study in East Nusa Tenggara Province; an important source area of Indonesian migrant workers

abroad, also showed that remittances sent back home by migrants made it possible for their children to continue to further education, even to University in Java (Raharto et al. 1999: 122–23).

The importance of remittances to the socio-economic conditions of the family members left behind (and also to the migrants' home villages) pointed to some important issues, particularly those related to improving formal remittance channels. Most Indonesian migrant workers originate from villages that lack banking and post office facilities. This lack invariably causes difficulties for the migrant worker's family in obtaining remittances. It is also important for local governments to educate beneficiaries in the use of remittances for more productive activities given that unemployment is a major factor pushing people to become migrant workers.

### **3. Qualifications of Indonesian Migrant Workers**

In global terms Indonesia is an important source of unskilled migrant workers. The Philippines, another important labour-sending country in Southeast Asia, is already one step ahead and has shifted the deployment of its labour from unskilled to more educated and skilled sectors (Huguet 1992). Even though employment opportunities for skilled labour are enabled by open competition in the international labour market, Indonesia's competitiveness is hindered somewhat because it is a relative latecomer to the international labour market.

The study conducted by PPK-LIPI in 1999 showed that among returned migrants interviewed in the study in West Java, East Kalimantan and Riau, 79.64 per cent had only primary school education (Raharto et al. 2002). Besides low educational levels, some migrant workers also could not read or write Latin characters and could not speak the Indonesian language (they spoke a local dialect). Many of them would have difficulties in understanding relevant administrative procedures, particularly work contracts (Raharto et al. 2002). An inability to read and write, and a lack of understanding of formal regulations governing migrant labour recruitment has probably spurred labour migration via illegal or undocumented channels.

Training, therefore, must be an important feature of Indonesian labour migration administration. The PPK-LIPI's study in 1999 showed that most intending migrant workers who applied for work in the formal sector as plantation and factory workers in Malaysia and Brunei Darussalam did not get any special training related to their work before their departure, as they would receive "intensive on the job training" in their work places abroad. However, those who work as domestic service workers receive some non-formal training related to the use of modern household utensils and electronic appliances. They also receive some instruction in the language and culture of the host country. This training is organised by the Indonesian Labour Recruitment Agency (Raharto et al. 2002).

An important issue related to the qualifications of Indonesian labour working abroad is that most of them have low educational levels and are unskilled workers. Most unskilled migrants never receive any practical training to prepare them to work overseas. Steps should also be taken to ensure that prospective migrant workers are supplied with knowledge of the kinds of jobs they would be expected to perform in order to help protect them from employer abuse.

#### 4. Undocumented Labour Migration

Undocumented labour, also known as the illegal migration flow, is a major issue in managing international labour migration in Indonesia as the nature of the movement makes detection difficult. Undocumented Indonesian migrant workers who work abroad include:

1. Migrants who clandestinely cross Indonesian borders to work in destination countries;
2. Migrants who enter destination countries under a non-work visa (e.g. tourist, visit pass or an *umroh*/pilgrimage visa to Mecca in Saudi Arabia but subsequently work);
3. Migrant workers who officially enter the destination country but run away from their designated employer (change their job) before the previous contract expires;
4. Migrant workers who officially enter the destination country but overstay their permits.

It is estimated that undocumented Indonesian labour movements are much higher than official movements, most undocumented migrants finding work in Malaysia. The flow of undocumented migrant workers from Indonesia to Malaysia, especially to Sabah and Sarawak, has historical roots in Malaysian pre-independence. These illegal movements involve complex networks of recruiters and middlemen who assist intending migrants to reach the destination country, following patterns of spontaneous migration that have occurred since the colonial period (Spaan 1994). Besides Malaysia, there are also undocumented Indonesian migration flows to Singapore, Saudi Arabia, Hong Kong and Taiwan, even though these flows may not be as high as to Malaysia.

A study among returned migrants, who had just returned to Nunukan from Sabah to complete their legal documentation before going back to work in Malaysia, revealed that illegal migrants could get jobs more easily and quickly. However, they do not have any legal status or legal protections. As the main destination country for most undocumented migrant workers from Indonesia, Malaysia has run several programmes for the regularisation of illegal immigrants since 1989 (Kassim 1996: 2). The Malaysian Government's Immigration Law No. 1154/2002 also attempts to reduce the flow of undocumented migrant workers to Malaysia (Mardzoeki 2002). This law threatens undocumented (or illegal) migrant workers

in Malaysia with fines, corporal punishment, or imprisonment. Its implementation resulted in the deportation of hundreds of thousands of undocumented Indonesian migrant workers from Malaysia to some transit areas in Indonesia. The highest number of migrant workers deported was found at Nunukan. The mass deportation of Indonesian migrant workers (49,876) to Nunukan in 2002 effectively created a humanitarian crisis (Yatim and Harry 2002; Ford n.d.: 11). However, such efforts will not effectively stop the flow of undocumented labour migration from Indonesia as long as demand for this form of labour is still high. In addition, such laws should be accompanied by regulations that provide penalties for employers who employ illegal migrant workers.

In response to the launch of Immigration Law No. 1154/2002, the Indonesian Government has been obliged to give special attention to the problems faced by Indonesian migrant workers in Malaysia as well as other countries of destination. The Indonesian Government needs to negotiate with the governments of receiving countries to guarantee legal protection for Indonesian migrant workers working in these countries. The issue of global terrorism makes the legal protection of Indonesian migrant workers abroad more important, and makes it imperative for the receiving countries to give more attention to the legal processes and documentation of international labour migrants entering their countries.

## **5. Protection of Indonesian Migrant Workers**

Protection means the elimination of exploitation, respect for basic human rights and rights at work, which currently is still not the case in practice (Wickramasekara 2002: 29). Migrant workers, both documented and undocumented, should be protected before they depart and while they are abroad. Undocumented migrant workers, because they are considered to have an illegal status, face a higher risk of being exploited before and after they arrive in the destination countries.

One important factor influencing the system for protecting Indonesian migrant workers before departure is the recruitment process. Basically, there are two ways by which intending migrant workers can register for overseas employment. One is to directly contact a labour recruiting company and the other is through recruiters or middlemen (or *calo* or *sponsor* in local terms), in some migrant villages of origin. There are several levels of *sponsor* in the recruitment process operating between villages of origin and recruiting companies in the cities that have official licenses to send migrant workers overseas. These make the recruitment and migration processes protracted and infest the recruitment process with exploitative practices. There is also a high possibility that prospective migrant workers are exposed to exploitation long before their departure due to their ignorance of important information regarding qualifications and other requirements to work overseas because the *sponsor* handles all these matters. In return, the prospective migrant workers must pay a large amount for their services (Raharto 2002a: 6).

When the migrant workers arrive in destination countries they are also vulnerable to certain abuses such as overwork, poor working conditions, psychological, physical or sexual harassment, as well as late payment of wages or deductions from wages higher than in the agreement. These abuses were found among Indonesian migrant workers working in major destination countries like Malaysia, Singapore, Brunei Darussalam and Hong Kong, and to a lesser extent in Saudi Arabia (Hugo 2002: 3). About 90 per cent of the 240,000 foreign domestic workers in Malaysia in 2004 were Indonesian citizens. Human Rights Watch documented that they worked 16 to 18 hours a day, seven days a week, with payment of less than US\$0.25 per hour (HRW 2004). The PPK-LIPI study also found some cases where migrant workers did not get paid as stated in the work contract. Many undocumented migrants working in the plantation or construction sectors said that they never received their proper wages. Sometimes they only received wages for one month, even though they had already worked for three months (Raharto et al. 2002: 160–62). Table 5 shows problems and abuses faced by Indonesian migrant workers abroad reported to the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration during 2005. These include non-payment of wages, severance of work contracts, torture and sexual harassment.

**Table 5:** Problems Faced by Indonesian Migrant Workers Abroad Reported to the Indonesian Ministry of Manpower and Transmigration (2005)

Type of problem	Number of cases
Unpaid wages	372
Severance of work contract	140
Torture	89
Sexual harassment	30
Loss of contact with family	253
Sickness	124
Accident	20
Involvement in criminality	12
Failure to go abroad	42
Total	1091

Source: Data for January to December 2005, Depnakertrans (2006b).

Lack of knowledge among prospective migrant workers of the administrative requirements and working conditions in destination countries seems to make a significant contribution to their potential vulnerability to abuse and exploitation.



Therefore, empowering prospective migrant workers with information is one means of providing them with protection before and after their departure.

The International Labour Organization (ILO) and the United Nations provide the main standards for protecting migrant workers. The ILO has two legally binding instruments relating to labour migrants: Convention No. 97 of 1949, concerning Migration for Employment, and Convention No. 143 of 1975, concerning Migrations in Abusive Conditions and the Promotion of Equality of Opportunity and Treatment of Migrant Workers. The United Nations adopted the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Members of Their Families (ICRMW) in New York on 18 December 1990, the Convention coming into force on 1 July 2003. However, as at October 2005 only thirty-four states had ratified the ICRMW, none being the major receiving countries of labour migrants (Cholewinski 2005; Nur Aini 2006).

Indonesia is one of the states that has not ratified the ICRMW, primarily because the Indonesian Government is not ready to face the consequences of providing the same protections to expatriates working in Indonesia (Nur Aini 2006). In order to protect Indonesian labour migrants, Law No. 39 on the Placement and Protection of Indonesian Workers Overseas was passed in October 2004, and attracted considerable controversy. The Indonesian Migrant Workers Union in Hong Kong, for example, requested the Indonesian Government repeal the law, as it is considered to burden the migrant workers rather than protect their rights (Ford n.d.: 10; Siregar 2006). On the other hand, labour-sending companies have also launched a court appeal to have the law amended (Ford n.d.: 10).

## 6. Conclusion

Indonesia is one of the world's major sources of international labour migrants; mostly unskilled, with Malaysia the most important receiving country in the Asia Pacific. It is likely that the flow of Indonesian labour migrants to work overseas will continue for some time in the future. Even though at the national level the economic contribution of this movement relatively insignificant, for many Indonesians working overseas is a better alternative to unemployment in their home villages. However, due to low educational levels and lack of skills, Indonesian migrant workers are mainly limited to unskilled employment in the plantation, construction, domestic or other service sectors. Furthermore, due to complex problems in the recruitment processes, the official recruitment process has become time consuming and more expensive, meaning that quite a large number of workers prefer to go abroad as undocumented migrants. These migrants are susceptible to exploitation and abuse. However, even documented migrant workers are potentially vulnerable to the same problems. In addition, the Indonesian Government does not provide its migrant workers with the safeguards implied in international protective instruments. For example, Indonesia has not yet ratified the International Convention on the Protection of the Rights of All Migrant Workers and Their Families (ICRMW). As we have seen, Indonesian laws on the Placement

and Protection of Indonesian Workers Overseas passed in 2004 also have attracted considerable controversy.

In sum, Indonesia is still facing major problems in benefiting from globalisation and the deregulated global labour market. Globalisation also generates intense competition for employment opportunities. Under these conditions, three major problems now facing the Indonesian Government are: (1) how to improve the qualifications of Indonesian migrant workers so they can have an improved bargaining position in the international labour market; (2) how to minimise undocumented Indonesian labour migration; and (3) how to provide Indonesian migrant workers with international standards of protection against abuse and exploitation before their departure, and after they arrive in destination countries.

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**About the Author**

Aswatini Raharto is a researcher and the director of the Research Centre for Population, Indonesian Institute of Sciences (PPK-LIPI), Jakarta. She has been involved with and coordinated various researches on population mobility including international labour migration, migration of people in Indonesian border areas and forced migration in conflict areas in Indonesia. She gained her Ph.D. in demography from the Australian National University. Email: tinias28@rad.net.id

# Where Internal and International Migration Intersect: Mobility and the Formation of Multi-Ethnic Communities in the Riau Islands Transit Zone

LENORE LYONS AND MICHELE FORD  
*University of Wollongong and University of Sydney*

*While migration studies scholars have paid considerable attention to internal migration within Indonesia, as well as to international labour migration flows from Indonesia, they have rarely considered the intersections between these two processes. This paper addresses the gap through a close analysis of migration flows in one of Indonesia's key transit areas – the Riau Islands. We argue that in the borderlands the processes of internal and international migration are mutually constitutive. The Riau Islands' status as a transit zone for international labour migrants and as a destination for internal migrants determines its demographic profile and policies of migration control. Bordering practices are strongly influenced by the fact that not everyone who comes to the Riau Islands has the intention of moving on, and not all international migrants returning to the islands intend to go home. Our analysis demonstrates that internal migration cannot be understood as a solely national phenomenon, and that international migration cannot only be explained by push and pull factors in sending and receiving destinations. These complexities necessitate research and policy responses that take into account the unique character of the transit provinces, and the role that their geographical location plays in the formation of multi-ethnic communities and the management of migration.*

Indonesia is the focus of considerable attention within contemporary migration studies. Migration scholars have documented in detail the dual processes of internal migration (both state-sponsored transmigration as well as “spontaneous” internal migration) within Indonesia as well as international labour migration flows from Indonesia. Internal migration, especially through the transmigration programme, has changed the economic, environmental and ethnic landscapes of many regions in Indonesia's outer islands (Dawson 1999; Elmhirst 2000; Fearnside 1997; Tirtosudarmo 1990). Meanwhile, the placement of hundreds of thousands of Indonesians overseas every year has reshaped communities not only in migrant

workers' provinces of origin, but in the borderland communities through which many of them pass on their way to and from overseas. In 2006, almost 650,000 Indonesians were placed through formal international labour migration programmes (Depnakertrans 2007a, 2007b). Many hundreds of thousands more leave through unofficial channels. It has been suggested that in the 1990s, migration from Indonesia to Malaysia through official channels was only one-third of that through alternative channels (Nayyar 1997).

It is perhaps surprising, then, that the literatures on these two kinds of migration seldom intersect. Instead, internal migration and international migration are dealt with as separate phenomena and the links between them are rarely considered. The extensive body of work on international labour migration from Indonesia has focused on national-level policies or on labour migrants' experiences in their provinces of origin, during the process of migration, or in the destination country (cf. Hugo 2002; Sukamdi and Brownlee 2000).<sup>1</sup> The ongoing preoccupation among researchers and activists with the regulatory frameworks and socio-cultural conditions in receiving countries and how these shape migrant workers' experiences of labour migration (cf. Huang et al. 2005; Loveband 2004) was sparked by several high profile cases of physical and sexual abuse, and deaths of migrant workers, many of them women working as domestic helpers in Asia and the Middle East (HRW 2004; Quinn 2002). Other accounts deal in depth with the individual experiences of migrant workers themselves (cf. Abdul Rahman 2003; von der Borch 2006; Wong and Anwar 2003). With a few exceptions (Tirtosudarmo 2004; Ford 2001, 2006), the literature has said very little about the impact of migration flows on the transit provinces through which many of them pass.

The lack of scholarly interest in Indonesia's transit provinces in part reflects the highly centralised approach taken by the national government during the Suharto years (1966–98), when policy-makers paid little attention to the documented flows of migrant workers through Sumatra and Kalimantan and refused to recognise the large flows of undocumented labour migrants across land and sea borders. The centralised approach to labour migration policy continued until 2002, when Malaysia stepped up forced repatriation of undocumented labour migrants causing a humanitarian crisis in the East Kalimantan border zone centred around Nunukan (Ford 2006). Although since then more attention has been paid to structures and processes for managing returned labour migrants in the transit zones, there has been little examination of the broader socio-economic impacts of migration on the transit zone community themselves.

This paper seeks to address this lacuna through a close analysis of migration flows in one of Indonesia's key transit areas – the Riau Islands (*Provinsi Kepulauan Riau*, Kepri Province).<sup>2</sup> The territory of Kepri Province consists of the main islands

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<sup>1</sup> For an overview of this literature see Ford (2006).

<sup>2</sup> The research on which this paper is based was funded by an Australian Research Council (ARC) Discovery Project grant *In the Shadow of Singapore: The Limits of Transnationalism in Insular*

of Bintan, Batam, Karimun (collectively known as the Riau Islands), along with Natuna and Lingga, as well as many other smaller islands and islets. The province was officially formed in 2002. Before that time, the islands – which lie in the Straits of Malacca to the north-east of Sumatra and directly south of Singapore – were incorporated into the Province of Riau, whose capital is located in Pekanbaru on the Sumatran Mainland. Like other borderland regions situated close to much wealthier economies, the Riau Islands have experienced rapid social and economic transformation by virtue of their proximity to Malaysia and Singapore. They are the site of considerable documented and undocumented labour flows to both countries, as well as the nearest point for repatriation of workers whose contracts have ended or undocumented migrants who have been deported. The islands have also attracted large numbers of internal transmigrants in search of work. This has particularly been the case since the formation of the Indonesia-Malaysia-Singapore Growth Triangle (IMS-GT) in 1990, a project that heralded a new era of cross-border economic engagement, promising to restore Riau Islanders' dreams of prosperity by leveraging Singapore's status as an "Asian Tiger" to improve economic conditions in the islands, and by allowing the islanders special access to Singapore and Malaysia.

We examine a range of geographical sites in Kepri Province in order to tease out the relationship between different forms of migration and various attempts to manage them. As Batam has been the main focus of the growth triangle initiative, it figures prominently in economic studies of the Riau Islands.<sup>3</sup> As a result, the realities of different island communities are often lost: the experiences of other islanders are either ignored or aggregated with those of Batam Islanders. In order to understand the differential impact that internal and international migration has had on different parts of the province it is important to consider more than one geographical location. In this paper, we focus on two internal sites (Batam and Bintan islands) and two geopolitical border sites (the Indonesia-Singapore and the Indonesia-Malaysia borders) and trace the migration flows across and within these sites over a thirty-year period. We have chosen the island of Bintan for two reasons. First, it is the site of the current provincial capital, Tanjung Pinang (also an important pre-colonial and colonial seat of power); and second, it has been the focus of a number of significant development projects under the IMS-GT. Our research is the first attempt to bring together existing (and sometimes piecemeal) demographic and qualitative data with an analysis of the regulatory frameworks designed to control population movements within and through the province. Our analysis begins with an overview of population movements into and out of the islands. This section documents the socio-economic forces that have contributed to the movement of large numbers of Indonesians into the transit area. We examine

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*Riau* (DP0557368) – see project website <http://www.uow.edu.au/arts/research/intheshadow/>. The ethnographic material draws on research interviews conducted with Riau Islanders and Singaporeans during 2004–07.

<sup>3</sup> In contrast, anthropological studies, with the exception of Lindquist (2004), focus on the island of Bintan (Wee 1985, 2002; Faucher 2006, 2002), or study the sea nomads of the region (Chou 2006; Chou and Wee 2002).

the impact that these movements have had on population sizes as well as the changing gender and ethnic composition of different island communities. This discussion serves as a background to the second part of the paper, where we explore the range of regulatory regimes that have been developed to shape and control population movements into and out of the Riau Islands.

Drawing on these quantitative and qualitative data, we argue that the processes of internal and international migration are mutually constitutive in the borderlands. Therefore, in order to understand border crossings and international migration from the Riau Islands into Singapore and Malaysia, attention must be given to mobility and exclusion within the border zone itself. The Riau Islands' status as a transit zone for international labour migrants and as a destination for internal migrants determines its demographic profile and policies of migration control. At the same time, the creation and control of *internal* borders within the borderlands is strongly influenced by the fact that not everyone who comes to the Riau Islands has the intention of moving on, and not all international migrants returning to the islands intend to go home. As the following discussion shows, policies designed to curb population movements between the islands and efforts to restrict migratory flows into and out of the province sometimes operate in accord, but more often they are incompatible. Closer attention to these interrelated processes allows us to develop a richer and more nuanced picture of migration patterns within the borderlands. Our analysis demonstrates that internal migration cannot be understood as a solely "national" phenomenon, and that international migration cannot only be explained by "push and pull" factors in sending and receiving destinations.

### **1. The Riau Islands as a Site of Desire**

The Riau Islands are located along Indonesia's frontier, thousands of kilometres from the nation's capital in Jakarta. They lie along the edge of the border between Indonesia, Singapore and Peninsular Malaysia. By ferry, Batam is less than an hour from Singapore; Karimun, which lies to the west of Batam, is less than an hour from the State of Johor in Malaysia. The particular location and nature of the Indonesia-Singapore-Malaysia borderlands make this region a special kind of border zone. The islands have been a site of desire for both internal and international labour migrants since the colonial period because of their strategic location on the Straits of Malacca. The flows of people into the Riau Islands and across the geopolitical borders have not been uniform over this time, but have risen and fallen with the fortunes of the different islands and cross-border economic synergies and political tensions. In the contemporary period, the fact that the islands are separated by narrow straits from the cosmopolitan centre of Singapore and the booming economy of Peninsular Malaysia make this border zone quite different from Indonesia's land borders with Eastern Malaysia, East Timor or Papua New Guinea. For example, in contrast to the transit zone of Nunukan in Eastern Kalimantan – which is imagined entirely as a place of crossing – the Riau Islands are both a space of intense movement internationally and a destination in themselves.



As the discussion that follows shows, the shifting patterns of human movement historically, but particularly over the last few decades, have had important consequences for the patterns of settlement, lifestyle and outlook in different communities in the islands. The rapid population growth experienced by both Batam and Bintan islands over this period has been the consequence of planned internal labour migration programmes, spontaneous labour migration generated by rumours of the region's booming economy, and largely unplanned return migration by documented and undocumented international labour migrants. The islands also accommodate a large temporary migrant population of documented and undocumented labour migrants, and a smaller transitory population of Indonesian tourists.<sup>4</sup> Our analysis demonstrates that these different "migrant" populations are not discrete, and individuals can move from one category to another over a short period of time.

### *1.1. The Riau Islands as a destination*

Although Batam and Bintan are part of the same border zone, their history of development and the population and migration profiles are very different. Bintan has long been established as a major population centre. Its capital Tanjung Pinang is one of the oldest cities in the region and traces its historical origins back to the seat of the Johor-Riau Sultanate located a short distance away on the tiny island of Penyengat. Tanjung Pinang then played a key role as the seat of the Dutch government in the region and was a key trading and customs port during the colonial period. By 1971, the population of the Riau Islands as a whole had reached 331,136 – a figure that had grown 1.7 per cent annually since 1961. Twelve per cent of the region's population were non-citizen residents, many of them Chinese (Esmara 1975: 26, 28). However, during the 1970s thousands of people migrated to Tanjung Pinang from the main Indonesian islands of Java and Sumatra, and to a lesser extent from other parts of the archipelago. Some of these were serving members of the military forces who decided to settle in the islands with their families, rather than moving to a new posting. Others were attracted by the prospect of better paying jobs. Many of these labour migrants travelled to the islands through kinship networks, and although the majority intended to spend a short period of time in the islands amassing their savings (as part of a tradition of *merantau*), others decided to settle permanently (Sobary and Foulcher 1987). By 1976, the total population of Bintan island was 111,091 (South China Sea Fisheries Development and Coordinating Program 1977).

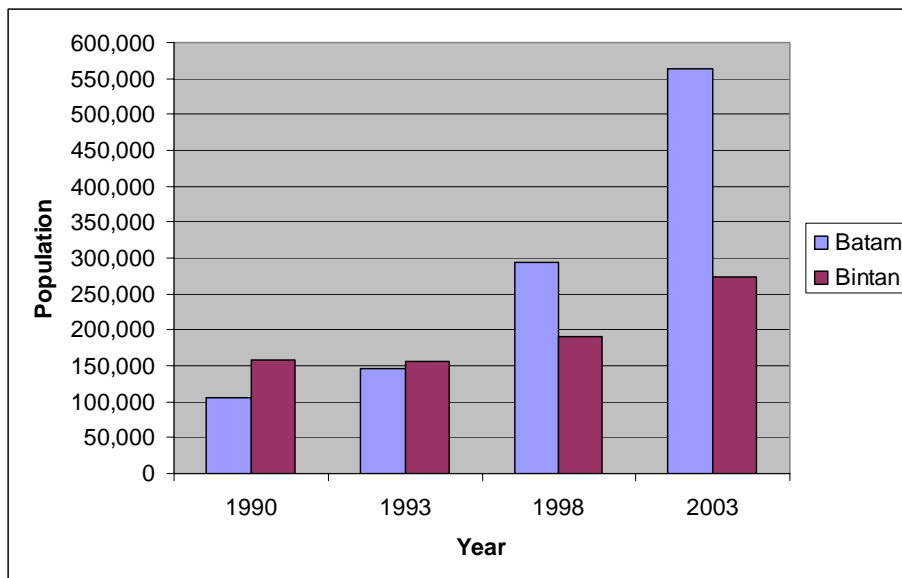
In contrast to Bintan, early migration to Batam was motivated by concerns to protect Indonesia's territorial sovereignty. A number of young people moved to Batam to support the Indonesian army after the declaration of Independence in 1945, and again during the period of Confrontation (Roeroe et al. 2003). The

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<sup>4</sup> The islands also attract a large number of international tourists, particularly from Singapore and Malaysia. While some of these tourists stay in the numerous beach resorts scattered on both islands, large numbers of working-class men also visit the islands as sex tourists. For a discussion of sex tourism in the islands see Ford and Lyons (2008).

population remained small in the early 1970s, when it reached an estimated 6,000 (Otorita Batam n.d.: 6), but began to approach the size of Tanjung Pinang in the late 1970s. By 1978, the year that Batam was designated as a tax-free bonded zone for export industries, its population had increased to 31,800. The signing of a development agreement between Indonesia and Singapore in 1980 then attracted domestic and foreign investors, and during the next ten years, large numbers of construction workers were brought to Batam to develop Batamindo Industrial Park and its associated infrastructure (roads, ports, housing).

**Figure 1:** Total Population of Batam and Bintan Islands (1990–2003)



Sources: Badan Perencanaan Pembangunan Daerah Kabupaten Kepulauan Riau dengan PT. Duta Consultant Engineering (2005); Bappeda dan Badan Pusat Statistik Kabupaten Kepulauan Riau (1999); Bappeda dan Kantor Statistik Kabupaten Kepulauan Riau (1994, 1991); BPS Kota Batam (2004).

Batam boasted a population of approximately 43,000 in 1983 (Roeroe et al. 2003), while Tanjung Pinang had a population of 47,175 in the same year (Sobary and Foulcher 1987: 9). Within a short period of time, however, the population on Batam had more than doubled. In 1990 Bintan's total population stood at 157,451 and Batam's population was 105,820 – see Figure 1.<sup>5</sup>

A major factor in this rapid population growth was the impending formation of the Indonesia-Malaysia-Singapore Growth Triangle. The proposal for the IMS-GT was spearheaded by the Singaporean Government, which was increasingly concerned

<sup>5</sup> The statistics we have used for Bintan have been compiled by disaggregating the statistics for the former Regency of Insular Riau and recompiling them according to the new local government boundaries. This was necessary in order to generate meaningful data series.

about the rising cost of local labour and the movement of multi-nationals out of Singapore into more cost-efficient manufacturing sites in other parts of Asia (Lee 1991). The proximity of the Riau Islands would allow Singapore to develop a “regionalisation strategy” that combined Singaporean capital and the city-state’s port and services industries with a ready pool of cheap labour (Sparke et al. 2004). The industrial manufacturing zones, ports and tourism projects established on the islands of Batam, Bintan and Karimun as a direct result of the growth triangle initiative now define the province’s economic landscape.<sup>6</sup> Once the IMS-GT was established, however, Batam began to attract the highest levels of foreign investment, and as a consequence the largest volume of migrants from within Indonesia seeking work in the industrial parks and tourist resorts (Grundy-Warr et al. 1999; Bunnell et al. 2006). By 1998 Batam’s population had more than doubled while Bintan’s grew at a much slower rate (see Figure 1). When the national census was taken in 2000, 43 per cent of the population of the Riau Islands had been born in another province or overseas. Almost half of these migrants had moved to the islands since 1995 (Ananta and Bakhtiar 2005: 17).

The IMS-GT was marred by numerous setbacks, culminating in the economic and political uncertainty following the Asian financial crisis (1997–98), when many multi-national investors began to downscale their levels of investment in Batam, and tourists, worried about social unrest, stayed away from the Bintan Resort zone.<sup>7</sup> The crisis had the opposite effect, however, on internal migration. The Riau Islands’ relative prosperity became a magnet for people in other parts of the Indonesian archipelago. In the three years following the crisis (1998–2001), Bintan experienced a 34 per cent increase while the growth rate in Batam’s population reached an incredible 79.5 per cent. By the end of 2004, the population of the province as a whole was 1,285,617 – 277,986 of whom lived on Bintan Island (160,918 in Tanjung Pinang) and 633,944 on Batam (Bappeda Provinsi Kepri n.d.).<sup>8</sup> Migrants from other parts of Indonesia were attracted to the Riau Islands by the prospects of employment in an economy that had been cushioned from the economic crisis of 1997–98, or because of their relative calm during the violence that erupted across the archipelago from 1998.<sup>9</sup>

Although the impact of the crisis on economic investment was relatively short-lived, the manufacturing sector has not recovered to pre-1997 levels and the growth triangle is generally regarded on all sides as a failure (Sparke et al. 2004). In recent years, however, growing global demand for oil has resulted in a boom in the shipping industries in the islands. In 2006, in an effort to re-invigorate the

<sup>6</sup> For details of major IMS-GT projects, see Peachey et al. (1998) and Pereira (2004).

<sup>7</sup> Personal communication, senior figure within Bintan Resort Development Corporation, April 2006.

<sup>8</sup> The growth of Bintan’s population outside the capital reflects the employment opportunities in the Bintan Resort Zone, which employs a significant number of internal migrants.

<sup>9</sup> Kelly suggests that the official population figures for Batam are a vast underestimate given the numbers of unrecorded migrants arriving daily in the late 1990s. He cites a senior Batam Industrial Development Agency (BIDA) official estimate that the total may be as high as 500,000 in 1998, with 1,000–2,000 new arrivals drawn by prospects of employment and fleeing conflict disembarking every week (Kelly 2004: 77).

economies of the islands, Singapore and Indonesia announced the creation of Special Economic Zones in Batam, Bintan and Karimun (BBK SEZ). The SEZ Framework Agreement on Economic Cooperation outlines seven key areas that Indonesia and Singapore will cooperate in to ensure that business, regulatory and labour conditions in the islands are favourable to investors (Ministry of Trade and Industry 2006). The agreement is still in its infancy and it remains to be seen what impact the BBK SEZ will have on local communities and continuing migration flows.

The rapid population growth in both Batam and Bintan has had a significant impact on the character of the urban communities on both islands. Lindquist (2002: 41) describes Batam as a “kind of crossroads inhabited by migrants and tourists [where] most people call somewhere else ‘home’, even if they have never been there, and most have plans to go elsewhere”. As the result of its long-standing status as an urban centre and the slower pace of economic development, Tanjung Pinang, the main town on Bintan, has far less of what Lindquist (2002: 12) calls Batam’s “distinct frontier-town atmosphere”. Earlier waves of migrants to Tanjung Pinang tended to assimilate into the local Malay culture and adopted an identity as *Orang Riau* (people from Riau) (Ford 2003b). However, importantly there has been some convergence between the social structures on Batam and Bintan over the last two decades. On Bintan, large numbers of new migrants, many of whom are less assimilationist than their counterparts in the 1960s and 1970s, have moved to Tanjung Pinang. On Batam, longer-term communities have developed that *do* call the island home.

Perhaps the most significant changes since the early 1980s have been on the ethnic make-up of the island communities. These new waves of migration to the Riau Islands since the lead-up to the formation of the IMS-GT built on historical patterns, which had already created a markedly heterogeneous population in the region. The original populations of the islands consisted of *Orang Melayu* (Malays) and *Orang Laut* (nomadic fisher-people) (Wee 1985). During the colonial period considerable numbers of Bugis traders and warriors, as well as Chinese traders and coolies, began to arrive, creating an increasingly diverse and vibrant community (Roeroe et al. 2003). The enormous inflow of labour migrants from throughout Indonesia during the 1990s led to the development of an even more ethnically diverse population. Figures from the 2000 census show that on Batam, the Javanese constitute the single largest ethnic group, followed by Malays, Minang and Bataks. On Bintan, Malays make up the largest ethnic group, followed by Javanese and Minang (see Table 1). According to the census, of the almost 1,800 foreign citizens living in the islands, 180 were Singaporeans and 168 were Malaysians, 172 and 133 of whom respectively were living in Batam.

**Table 1:** Population of Batam and Bintan by Ethnicity (2000)

Ethnicity	Batam		Bintan	
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage
Malay	91 386	20.90	132 708	41.54
Javanese	116 726	26.69	70 676	22.12
Minang	65 057	14.87	20 023	6.27
Batak	65 239	14.92	11 192	3.50
Sundanese	14 162	3.24	8 220	2.57
Bugis	9 999	2.29	6 785	2.12
Flores	9 298	2.13	3 353	1.05
Banjar	2 908	0.66	2 676	0.84
Others	61 059	13.96	63 597	19.91
Foreign	1 524	0.35	252	0.08
<b>Total</b>	<b>437 358</b>	<b>100.00</b>	<b>319 482</b>	<b>100.00</b>

Source: BPS Riau Province (2005a, 2005b).

Although Chinese Indonesians are not specifically identified in provincial statistics tables, ethnic Chinese comprise a significant proportion of “others” on both islands, particularly Bintan, where the city of Tanjung Pinang has a large Chinese community. In 1930, 60 per cent of Tanjung Pinang’s population was Chinese (Butar-Butar 2000: 5). However, the influx of migrants, most of them not Chinese, over the last three decades has shifted the ethnic balance between the Chinese and non-Chinese in the city, and to a lesser extent in other parts of the Riau Islands.<sup>10</sup> In 1991 the Chinese community accounted for 16 per cent of the entire population of the Riau Islands (Rusli et al. 1996: 60), while national census data from 2000 show that the Chinese community in the Riau Islands comprised just under 10 per cent of the population (Ananta and Bakhtiar 2005: 20).

The gender composition of the population has also changed considerably since the formation of the IMS-GT. On Batam since the late 1990s when the factory and port infrastructure was completed, construction workers and male factory workers began to be replaced by large numbers of female factory workers who were believed to be best suited to work in the electronic industries.<sup>11</sup> Since 1999, women have outnumbered men on Batam, reflecting increased pressure on women in other parts of Indonesia to migrate for work as a result of the Asian Financial Crisis of 1997-98 (BPS Kota Batam 2004). In contrast, in Bintan, men continue to outnumber women reflecting the island’s more traditional economic opportunity structures, which attract more male migrants than females (annual volumes of *Kepulauan Riau Dalam Angka* 1990–2005). This reflects the fact that the IMS-GT

<sup>10</sup> Note that we have heard many accounts of Chinese from Jakarta and other major cities in Indonesia taking shelter in the islands during the anti-Chinese riots of 1998.

<sup>11</sup> For a discussion of the gendered ideologies associated with employment practices in export processing zones in Southeast Asia see Ong (1987) and Wolf (1992).

had a much less significant, and more differentiated, impact on development opportunities in Bintan where there is a much smaller manufacturing sector. The large resort enclave in the north of the island (which takes up almost one-third of the Bintan landmass), provides a limited number of jobs and is effectively cut off from the rest of the island, thereby reducing opportunities for associated service industries to develop alongside the resorts.

The impact of these migratory flows on the life of island communities has been dramatic. While earlier waves of migrants tended to assimilate into local Malay culture, the sheer volume of later arrivals, combined with the often temporary nature of their sojourn, has meant that many groups continue to retain their languages and cultural practices. In some areas these ethnic differences are a source of tension, sometimes leading to open conflict. As new migrants settle and as the population of locally born residents grows, however, a new group of *Orang Kepri* have begun to emerge.

### *1.2. The Riau Islands as a space of transit*

Most studies of Batam or the growth triangle make some reference to the large number of people passing through the islands in search of work overseas, but very little has been written on these international flows and their impact on the social and ethnic mix of different communities in the islands themselves. This silence belies the fact that the Riau Islands are a key point of departure and return for large numbers of tourists and international labour migrants from Indonesia to Singapore and Malaysia, and the extent of the impact of international flows – particularly those of labour migrants – have on local communities in the islands.

Singapore receives significantly more visitors from Indonesia than from any other country. In 2003, 22 per cent of all visitors to Singapore held Indonesian passports. In that year, of a total of 1,341,708 Indonesian visitors to Singapore, 661,962 arrived by sea, mostly from the Riau Islands (Singapore Tourism Bureau 2004: 16).<sup>12</sup> In the same year, 621,651 Indonesians visited Malaysia on tourist visas, or just under 6 per cent of a total of 10,576,915 visitors (Tourism Malaysia n.d.).<sup>13</sup> Although departure data do not disaggregate Indonesian tourists by place of residence, it is common knowledge that many Indonesians leaving through Batam in particular come from elsewhere in the archipelago, as it is far cheaper to take an internal flight to Batam and make the ferry crossing to Singapore, or less commonly to Malaysia, than to fly directly from Jakarta or other major Indonesian cities. In addition, all Indonesians pay less exit tax (or *fiskal*) if they leave by land or sea. Regular travellers may even seek to illegally obtain a local identity card and passport in the islands so that they can avoid the exit tax altogether. Batam's status as a transit point for Indonesian tourists leaving for Singapore has had a significant impact on its economy. Staff at large hotels in Batam cite guests' desire to travel

<sup>12</sup> This figure also includes some Indonesian foreign domestic workers, since many domestic workers enter Singapore on a social visit pass before receiving an official work permit.

<sup>13</sup> We do not have access to statistics regarding how many of these Indonesians arrived by sea.

onto Singapore as a major consideration for both individual tourists and for event organisers, for whom Batam is now an established location for large conferences. As Bintan's airport has been unavailable for large commercial flights for some years, it has not benefited from the same kind of tourist traffic.<sup>14</sup>

The other major kind of cross-border traffic to flow through the Riau Islands consists of labour migrants seeking work in Singapore or Malaysia. In 2006, 1,910 migrant workers left Tanjung Pinang through official channels to work overseas, 61 per cent of them women (Dinas Tenaga Kerja dan Kesejahteraan Sosial Pemerintah Kota Tanjung Pinang 2006). Data collected from interviews with unofficial "passport agents" and labour sending companies in 2005 suggest that many more of the migrant workers who pass through the province are undocumented, or in possession of *aspal* (*asli tapi palsu*, real but fake) documents – official travel documents obtained illegally in the islands. As with tourists, Bintan and Batam's roles in the flow of overseas labour migrants differs significantly. Batam is now the main official point of departure, particularly for migrants seeking to work in Singapore. This has particularly been the case since 2004, when the Indonesian Government introduced a requirement that all Indonesian women going abroad to work as domestic workers should be tested in Batam on their knowledge of English and household tasks before being deployed overseas (Zainol 2004).

Significant numbers of workers seeking to enter Singapore and Malaysia illegally also pass through the Riau Islands. In 1986 Tanjung Pinang was considered the most strategic staging post to travel illegally to Singapore and Malaysia (Sobary and Foulcher 1987: 5). As transport infrastructure improved on the island of Batam it became the preferred departure point. However, many migrants travelling through irregular channels continue to leave from Bintan or the island of Karimun (Ford 2003a). The Riau Islands became a key staging point for illegal entry into Singapore and Malaysia in the aftermath of the Asian Financial Crisis. This was partly a consequence of the islands' resilience to the economic problems facing other parts of Indonesia. Men and women travelled to the islands in large numbers hoping of finding work in the export manufacturing zones. Inevitably, the formal sector was unable to absorb them. With little prospect of work in their home villages many of these internal migrants made the decision to try their luck in Singapore and Malaysia. As the effects of the crisis finally began to be felt in the islands, internal migrant workers who had been laid off from their jobs in Batam's formal sector also began to attempt to cross the border illegally.

Workers who leave through official and unofficial channels spend a significant period of time in the islands before departure, housed in barracks or in agents' homes, and undertaking "training" in local households (cf. Ford 2001). This phenomenon is so widespread that instead of using the word *pembantu* (helper or servant), local residents use the term TKI (*Tenaga Kerja Indonesia*, Indonesian

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<sup>14</sup> The airport between Sekupang and Tanjung Pinang, which was heavily used in the 1970s by mining interests, is currently being upgraded to accommodate flights from Jakarta and other major centres.

worker) – the Indonesian Government’s official term for blue-collar international labour migrants – to describe their household help. Although some intending migrant workers are given little opportunity to leave their barracks, many others engage in the life of the community during their time in the islands, patronising local businesses and recreation sites. Most local residents we interviewed in 2005–2006 did not feel that they created a disturbance, although many did note that social problems did arise if agents kept them in holding centres too long before placing them overseas.

The islands have not only become a major departure point for Indonesians seeking to work abroad, they have also become an arrival point for returning international migrants. Not all of these workers arrive in the islands of their own accord – while some are “dumped” in the islands by errant employers, others are “repatriated” to Indonesia by the Singaporean or Malaysian governments as part of their deportation actions. Some of these “illegals” seek to cross the border again as quickly as possible, while others return to their home provinces. Yet another group decide to remain in the islands, forming a new cohort of internal migrants. It is important, then, to remember that even temporary labour migrants become long-term residents, creating increasingly heterogeneous populations and potentially transforming the meanings attached to “home”.

Spaan (1994: 97) claims that illegal workers who returned to Batam in the early 1990s were absorbed into the local manufacturing industry. As their numbers began to increase, however, local job opportunities became scarce. This problem became more apparent when increasing numbers of undocumented migrant workers were repatriated to the islands after the Malaysian Government passed a new immigration act in 2002 (see below). Many of the repatriated workers had neither the money nor the desire to return to their provinces of origin, instead hoping to earn enough money in the Riau Islands to permit them to leave for Singapore or Malaysia once more. However, their increasing presence put significant pressure on the transit zone’s economy and social infrastructure, and many migrants who stayed in the islands were absorbed into the informal sector and the vice industries, including prostitution, drug trade, smuggling and gangsterism (*premanisme*). More recently, there have been reports of female domestic workers being “dumped” in the islands by their Singaporean employers who do not want to pay the full cost of repatriating them to their home villages in Java and Sumatra. These women arrive in the islands often without money or contacts and have little means to return home (HRW 2005: 50).

This analysis of the migration flows into and out of the Riau Islands demonstrates the fluid nature of the categories “internal” and “international” migrant. The IMS-GT may be criticised for failing to produce the levels of anticipated economic growth and development originally forecast by member nations, but it has had a dramatic impact on flows of people into the Riau Islands as well as flows across the border into Singapore and Malaysia. As our discussion indicates, these



migration flows were the consequence of a complex range of interconnected forces operating in the islands and abroad.

## 2. Internal and International Borders

In the previous section we documented the volume and type of migration into and out of the Riau Islands by internal and international migrants. These flows do not occur in a policy vacuum. A range of regulatory measures have been instituted to manage the flows of migrants into the province, between different islands in the province, and across the borders into Singapore and Malaysia. In this section, we describe the policy and legislative frameworks that attempt to control population movements into and out of the islands, and examine what impact they have had on those flows.

### 2.1. *International bordering practices*

Until relatively recently the concept of *international* migratory flows between Insular Riau and Singapore and Malaysia was rendered problematic by the lack of a locally recognised geopolitical boundary and the absence of clear national immigration regimes. The borders that today mark out the nation-states of insular Southeast Asia are based in large part on boundaries created under the Anglo Dutch Treaty of London (1824). Prior to this date, the Johor Sultanate, centred in the islands of Riau, was the site of political power in the region. Pre-colonial trade routes acted as conduits for the movement of people and goods and facilitated the creation of strong social, cultural and economic ties amongst different communities. The Anglo Dutch Treaty, however, effectively split the Johor-Riau Sultanate into two parts, each governed with varying degrees of success by their respective colonial powers (Trocki 1979; Tagliacozzo 2007). The British focused their attention on the Straits Settlements, and transformed Singapore into a dominant *entrepôt*, while the Dutch, distracted by events in Java and mainland Sumatra, exercised limited control over the Riau Islands. Meanwhile a flourishing Chinese barter trade between Singapore and Indonesia (labelled “smuggling” by the Dutch), saw the Riau islands become increasingly tied to the Singapore economy (Tagliacozzo 2007; Trocki 1990).

The first attempts to regulate the flow of people throughout the Malay Archipelago occurred during the late colonial period. From the 1930s onwards, the British colonial authorities in the Straits Settlements were increasingly concerned about regulating the flow of Chinese and Indian labour migrants into Singapore and Malaya. By the end of the Second World War, Chinese migration into Malaya had effectively ceased (Kaur 2004: 212). In contrast, “Indonesians” were assumed to be of the same “racial stock” as local Malays (Kaur 2004: 209) and Indonesian labour migration to Malaya continued to be encouraged by the British. The Immigration Ordinance of 1953, however, saw the introduction of more stringent border controls into Malaya reflecting growing nationalist sentiment at the time. In the post-Second World War period in Singapore, attempts to regulate Indonesian

migration were complicated by the presence of a number of competing forces vying for international recognition of their status as official agents of the newly created Republic of Indonesia. For example, between 1945 and 1947 there were at least three different groups *within* Singapore issuing passports for the Republic (Yong 2003: 79)<sup>15</sup> – not all of which were accepted within the Republican territories themselves, or by the Dutch.<sup>16</sup> In reality, the papers held by cross-Strait travellers were of limited significance, and traders and their families continued to cross the border between Insular Riau and Singapore with relative ease.

The Malayan Emergency (1948–60) saw the introduction of a compulsory system of identification cards for all Straits Settlement residents aged 12 years and over.<sup>17</sup> For some individuals, the issuing of formal identity papers actually allowed them to claim citizenship in their place of residence even though they had been born elsewhere. High levels of mobility meant that it was not uncommon for many families (both Malay and Chinese) to consist of children who were born in different places. Individuals, and sometimes entire families, simply adopted the nationality (and associated identity papers) that best suited them at the time. This changed significantly in 1963 when the formation of the Federation of Malaya led to a period of tense stand-off between Malaya and Indonesia, commonly referred to as Confrontation.<sup>18</sup> With Confrontation, the border's role in identifying and keeping apart the new national citizens of Indonesia and Malaya (soon to become Malaysia and Singapore in 1965) was made far more apparent.<sup>19</sup> As citizenship laws began to be tightened, and immigration controls made it more difficult to cross the border without passports or other identity papers, some families found themselves divided. For individuals caught on the “wrong” side of the border during Confrontation, there was a strong imperative to “adopt” a new nationality as a means of proving one's allegiance to the nation. The case of one of our informants, a “Singaporean Malay”, reveals the ease with which this transformation could take place. He and his brother were both born in Tanjung Pinang but went to school in Singapore. Their younger siblings were all born in Singapore, but moved back to Riau in the early 1960s. The family was separated during Confrontation and to avoid problems with local authorities, the boys simply “switched” citizenship by claiming they had lost their birth certificates. Instead, they relied on their school records to demonstrate that they were Singapore nationals.

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<sup>15</sup> By this time, there was a widespread understanding in Singapore that Dutch passports would not be accepted (Yong 2003: 79).

<sup>16</sup> For example, the Dutch declared that in Tanjung Pinang, only passports issued by Indoff (Indonesia Office), the Republic of Indonesia's diplomatic mission in Singapore, would be recognised (Yong 2003, 79).

<sup>17</sup> These identity cards became the basis for future immigration and citizenship regimes in the independent nations of Singapore and Malaysia.

<sup>18</sup> The Riau Islands, along with Indonesia's land border with Sabah and Sarawak in Borneo, were a key location during the stand-off. Large numbers of defence force personnel from other parts of Indonesia were stationed in the islands at this time, a significant number of whom later settled there.

<sup>19</sup> For personal accounts of the difficulties faced by Bintan islanders in travelling to Singapore during this time, see Ford and Lyons (2006).

By the mid-1970s, cross-border movements were increasingly regulated by more stringent customs and passport checks on the Singaporean and Malaysian sides of the border. For those not officially seeking to cross borders for work, entry requirements for Indonesian, Singaporean and Malaysian passport holders to ASEAN member countries are now consistent. They may enter an ASEAN country without a visa and stay for up to thirty days on a tourist or social visit pass. Under the terms of the IMS-GT, Riau Islanders were offered improved access to Singapore and Malaysia because they would not have to pay the exit tax (*fiskal*) imposed by the Indonesian Government on its citizens.<sup>20</sup> But while Singaporean and Malaysian immigration law supposedly treats all Indonesian passport holders in the same way, Riau Islanders' ability to cross into Singapore or Malaysia is also influenced by immigration profiling that is mediated by ethnicity and class, which targets Indonesians deemed to be travelling for illegitimate purposes. Chinese informants have suggested that they find it easier to cross the border than their non-Chinese compatriots. While many middle-class Riau Islanders continue to travel regularly to Singapore and Malaysia to visit relatives or for medical tourism, working and lower-middle class Indonesians face longer waiting times than civil servants or members of the upper-middle class. As they pass through immigration checkpoints their documents are carefully scrutinised, and they are often interrogated at length about the reasons for their journey. In Singapore, such visitors are frequently asked to provide proof of their ability to support their time in the city-state through the provision of *uang tunjuk* (show money).<sup>21</sup>

The attention shown to Indonesian visitors by immigration officials in Singapore and Malaysia reflects ongoing – and increasingly punitive – attempts to regulate the flow of documented and undocumented labour migrants into both countries.<sup>22</sup> Up until the 1980s, Singapore and Malaysia received only a very small percentage of Indonesian labour migrants. Since the mid-1980s, however, increasing numbers of documented migrants are seeking work in the region (Nayyar 1997). Figures released in the 2000 census show that Singapore's 612,200 foreign workers constitute 29.2 per cent of the total workforce. About 500,000 of these workers are considered unskilled or low-skilled, of which an estimated 150,000 are domestic workers, approximately one-third of whom are from Indonesia (Almenoar and Tan 2004). In contrast, among the male foreign workers, Indonesian men constitute a small minority. The guest worker programme in Singapore is tightly regulated to ensure that low-skilled foreign workers remain temporary workers who can be easily repatriated during periods of economic recession. Among the measures used to control the flow of labour migrants are a work permit system, a dependency ceiling (which regulates the proportion of foreign to local workers), and a foreign

<sup>20</sup> As noted above, many Indonesians from Jakarta and elsewhere fly to Batam and then make the ferry trip to Singapore or Malaysia in order to avoid the higher rate of *fiskal* charged on citizens leaving Indonesia by air, along with the higher costs of international flights.

<sup>21</sup> The need to provide *uang tunjuk* has given rise to a lucrative credit lending business on the Indonesian side of the border.

<sup>22</sup> Labour flows are also monitored, with varying degrees of success, on the Indonesian side of the border. Labour migrants are required to register with the Indonesian Department of Manpower, a task that is normally completed on their behalf by recruitment agencies.

worker levy (Huang and Yeoh 2003: 80). The majority of low skilled workers come through legal work placement agencies on a maximum of two years employment contract (subject to a one-off renewal).

Significant numbers of Indonesians also enter Singapore to work illegally. Spaan (1994: 97) notes that in the early 1990s, as a consequence of the growing manufacturing sector in Batam, Javanese men were attracted to the islands and would alternate between work in Batam factories and illegal work in Singapore. There was an unprecedented growth in the numbers of illegal immigrants entering Singapore via the Riau Islands in 1998 as a consequence of the Asian Financial Crisis. While 1997 figures show a total of 84 illegal entrants arrested at sea that year (*Straits Times* 1998), the figure in April 1998 alone was 258 (Teo 1998). The authorities identified Batam and Tanjung Pinang as major hubs for smuggling syndicates who operated throughout Indonesia. In an effort to crack down on illegal migration, the Singaporean Government stepped up its coastal surveillance, as well as tightening immigration controls at the major checkpoints in the ferry terminals that serviced arrivals from the Riau Islands. Indonesians suspected of entering on tourist visas in order to work illegally were turned away at the immigration counters. The drop in the exchange rate made it more difficult for Indonesians to obtain the “right” amount of *uang tunjuk*. To spread news of its harsh treatment of illegal entrants, the Immigration Department started showing videos to passengers departing for Batam and Bintan at the World Trade Centre and Tanah Merah Ferry Terminals warning about tough immigration laws for illegal workers. The video showed illegal migrants being arrested at worksites and housing flats. Indonesians passing through the terminals were encouraged to tell their compatriots “back home” about the government crackdowns on “illegals”. Singaporeans were warned about the dangers of large numbers of unskilled Indonesian migrants entering Singapore and were urged to be vigilant in order to protect the island city (Miller and Singh 1998). They were told that as a nation, Singaporeans had to “grow calluses on their heart” when confronted with the plight of Indonesia’s poor.

Due to increased global concerns about terrorism since 2001, Singapore began to step up border patrols in the Straits, and as a consequence the numbers of immigration offenders arriving by sea remains low. Immigration regulations, combined with an effective border control system and an active policy of monitoring the legal status of foreign workers in workplaces, have resulted in relatively low numbers of undocumented labour migrants.<sup>23</sup> Our research suggests, however, that many Riau Islanders continue to enter the country on tourist passes and work as temporary labourers. Indonesians are recruited as cleaners and domestic helpers during key cultural and religious festivals such as Chinese New Year and Idul Fitri, and as seamstresses and handymen. These periods also attract significant numbers of hawkers and traders who sell goods in markets around the

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<sup>23</sup> 153 people were arrested trying to enter Singapore by sea in 1999 (Ministry of Home Affairs 1999). This figure rose to 307 in 2000, but dropped to 123 in 2001 after a range of new border protection measures were introduced (Ministry of Home Affairs 2001).

islands. Indonesian women from the islands also enter Singapore on tourist passes to work temporarily in the local sex industry (Henson 2004).

Indonesia's contemporary sea border with Peninsular Malaysia is far more porous than its border with Singapore. In the 1970s, Indonesians were welcomed by the Malaysian Government as part of its attempt to "balance" Malaysian society demographically and economically after the race riots of 1969. However, following the economic recession of the mid-1980s public opinion turned against Indonesians (Crisis 2005). Migrant labour is an integral part of Malaysia's economic growth and rising demand for skilled workers at home has seen the construction, plantation, forestry and services sectors experience labour shortages that have been filled by migrant labour. As of the end of June 2006, 1.84 million registered foreign workers were employed in Malaysia. These constituted over 16 per cent of the workforce. Of these, 64.7 per cent were from Indonesia (Ministry of Finance Malaysia 2007: 78). Indonesian women typically occupy positions in manufacturing, hospitality and domestic work. Recent figures suggest that there are more than 161,000 documented domestic workers, over half of whom come from Indonesia (Chin 2003). In addition, there are estimated to be almost as many undocumented migrant women working as domestic workers in Malaysian homes (Tenaganita 2005). Indonesian men work in the construction, manufacturing and plantation sectors.

The Malaysian Government has long sought to regulate the flow of Indonesian migrant workers while allowing large numbers to enter illegally between crackdowns. Although Indonesian workers are an integral part of the Malaysian economy they are subject to regular deportation campaigns. These deportations are short-lived and large numbers of foreign workers subsequently return (Ford 2006). Undocumented workers are deemed to be "illegal" and are subjected to harsh and arbitrary immigration laws. Because of their status, undocumented migrants are frequently subject to harassment, extortion and theft by the police and immigration authorities. Those arrested can be detained in detention camps under extremely harsh conditions for such periods as are deemed necessary to arrange for their deportation (Suaram 2003). Like the Singaporean Government, the Malaysian Government also intensified its efforts to control labour migration from Indonesia after the Asian Financial Crisis. These efforts culminated in the revision of the Immigration Act in 2002 and the subsequent deportation of hundreds of thousands of undocumented workers to Belawan, Batam and Dumai in Sumatra, and Pontianak and Nunukan in Kalimantan (Ford 2006). However, Malaysia's labour immigration regime continues to operate on regular but unpredictable cycles of crackdowns and unofficial policy relaxation, depending on the needs of the labour market and the political pressure of community hostility to labour migrants. In recent years, during crackdowns, the threat of arrest has increased with the commissioning of volunteer forces (known as RELA). As extensive press coverage has confirmed, the RELA forces have a reputation for violent behaviour and racial profiling. According to NGO sources, RELA members receive a bounty for each

irregular labour migrant they arrest, in addition to a daily allowance for their expenses.

Tightening immigration regimes are not the only factors that account for changes in the numbers and levels of cross-border migration into Singapore and Malaysia. Significant differences in the wages and costs of living in the three countries make it expensive for Indonesians to travel abroad. Although wealthier Riau Islanders continue to holiday in Singapore and Malaysia – along with wealthy Indonesians from other parts of the archipelago – our lower middle and working-class respondents have indicated that after the crisis the border began to represent a serious barrier to their mobility. This time, however, it was not because physical movement was restricted, but because growing economic disparities began to disrupt their dreams and expectations about a shared “way of life” across the Straits (Ford and Lyons 2006).

## *2.2. Construction of internal borders*

The inflow of inter-provincial migrants has also been a matter of concern for different levels of government. In 1928, the Dutch Government made the Riau Archipelago into a free trade zone in an attempt to take over some of the trade then passing through Singapore (Touwen 2001: 90). Our older long-term respondents in Karimun and Tanjung Pinang indicated that people arriving from other parts of Indonesia were required to have special documentation. Many of the labour migrants who came to Batam from the late 1970s were recruited under a programme involving eleven other Indonesian provinces. Called the *Angkatan Kerja Antar Daerah* (Inter-Region Work Force) (Roeroe et al. 2003), the programme allowed migrants to stay in Batam if they found stable formal-sector jobs. Similar arrangements were put in place under the IMS-GT. The Batamindo Authority created a special subsidiary company (TunasCarrier) to recruit labour on behalf of companies located on the site. Employees were sought from all over Indonesia and were signed up on contracts with the subsidiary company rather than the individual employers (Murray and Perera 1996: 62). These restrictive contracts ensured that the migrant workers were bound to TunasCarrier and could not change jobs freely. Companies in Batam were responsible for providing housing for their employees and for covering the costs of their repatriation to their home villages at the end of their employment contracts. This arrangement was largely unsuccessful in regulating the inflow of migrants to Batam, as large numbers of people arrived using the services of unofficial labour recruiters (*calo*) or came of their own accord. A number of multinationals, unhappy with the quality of labour supplied by Batamindo, also began to source their labour themselves (Murray and Perera 1996: 62).

These attempts to regulate the inflow of migrant workers needed for the manufacturing and tourism sectors have had a negative impact on the employment opportunities of resident Riau Islanders. Bintan islanders who travel to Batam in search of work in the factory zones have found themselves disadvantaged by a

system of recruitment that operates on networks based in Java and the Sumatran mainland, resulting in lesser access to jobs for local islanders as well as poorer wages and conditions. "Local hires" are offered lower wages than workers recruited from other parts of Indonesia, and are often the first to be retrenched when there is a downturn in production. On Bintan, the Lobam EPZ and the Bintan Resort Zone are located long distances from the main urban communities and jobs were largely taken up by Indonesian migrant workers from Sumatra, Sulawesi, Java and Bali. These internal bordering practices served to create tensions between long-term residents and local arrivals. These tensions were further heightened as migrants increasingly moved into areas where locals were traditionally employed.

The local economies of Batam and Bintan could not successfully absorb all the migrants that arrived in the decade following the Asian Financial Crisis. As the population increased, so too did levels of unemployment. National data indicate that in 2003, the proportion of working-age Riau Islanders not in work was as high as 17.68 per cent in the old Riau Islands Regency (incorporating Tanjung Pinang), while Batam reached 19.74 per cent. In that same year, approximately 44 per cent of the working-age population of the Riau Islands Regency was employed in the formal sector, while in Batam the figure was over 71 per cent (Ananta and Bakhtiar 2005: 23). Batam's infrastructure in particular was unable to keep up with the large numbers of migrants arriving every week. The situation was exacerbated by the fact that at this time the Riau Islands were also the staging post for the departure of large numbers of undocumented labour migrants seeking work in Singapore and Malaysia. In Batam, most of the local housing had been built for factory workers and was simply not available to the unemployed and those in the informal sector. The housing shortage resulted in the establishment of large squatter settlements across the island (Grundy-Warr et al. 1999). There have been sporadic attempts by local authorities to dismantle these squatter settlements, but many have grown into established communities with electricity, water and other services.

The creation of the new province of Kepri in September 2002 as part of the Indonesia's regional autonomy programme has given local authorities greater capacity to regulate the flows of labour migrants through the implementation of local government regulations, or *peraturan daerah*.<sup>24</sup> Batam introduced population controls through Local Government Regulation No. 2/2001 on the Registration and Control of the Population in the City of Batam, which came into force on 1 October 2001. Under the regulation, people undertaking family visits are only permitted to remain for a period of fifteen days, while business and other visitors have to present paperwork demonstrating the purpose of their visit. Newcomers seeking work have to deposit sufficient funds for a return ticket and demonstrate that they have enough money to cover fifteen days' living costs in Batam. Those not planning to settle permanently in Batam are issued temporary local identity cards (Batam City Government 2001).

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<sup>24</sup> In the Riau Islands, these laws build on attempts to regulate in-migration in the period before Confrontation. Similar regulations were enacted in Jakarta and a number of other provinces after regional autonomy.

Attempts by local authorities in Batam to manage these flows in turn had flow-on effects in other places in the province. As it became increasingly difficult for prospective international migrants to cross the border from Batam, they attempted to do so by going through Bintan and Karimun. This put considerable pressure on local authorities to do something about the problem. Police were on standby in the ports and instructed to round up individuals whom they suspected were planning to cross the border illegally (Ford 2003a). Newspaper reports suggest that in 2001 as many as 183 people were deployed to ports in Batam itself and to twelve departure checkpoints in Jakarta, Mainland Sumatra, and in Tanjung Balai Karimun, Kundur, Tanjung Batu, Tanjung Pinang in the Riau Islands (Kompas 2001), and by December 2006 the Batam local government had collected Rp.160,000,000 in return ticket deposits under the law (Batam Pos Online 2007). The enforcement of these regulations has been patchy and sporadic. In most ports, officials do not bother to check travel papers or determine who is a migrant and who is a local. One of our informants stated that most officials ignore travellers on intra-island ferries and focus their attention on boats arriving from other provinces.

Another structure developed in the province to regulate the presence of Indonesians from other parts of the Archipelago is the system of holding centres for undocumented labour migrants expelled from Malaysia. By late 2004, the provincial government had established four holding centres with a combined capacity of 2,000 people in Batam, and another centre, accommodating up to 600 people, in Tanjung Pinang. The Batam holding centre was located in a facility built earlier to detain Indonesian citizens found to be in breach of Local Government Regulation No. 2/2001, which by 2004 was no longer in use since the inflow of migrants from other parts of Indonesia had stabilised (Head of the Batam local government's population division cited in Tempointeraktif 2004). Deported migrant workers are not permitted to stay in the Riau Islands: after a maximum period of two weeks, they are returned to their home provinces.<sup>25</sup> In 2006 alone, 16,805 Indonesians passed through the Tanjung Pinang holding centre (Satuan Tugas Tim Pemulangan Tenaga Kerja Indonesia Bermasalah (TKI-B) dan Keluarganya dari Negeri Malaysia Kota Tanjung Pinang 2006a, 2006b, 2006c).

Given the limited success that the provincial authorities have had in restricting the inflow of migrants seeking to use the Riau Islands as a staging post for cross-border labour migration, these rules represent a very partial attempt to regulate migration flows after the fact. Local authorities recognise that there is little they can do to restrict attempts by migrant workers to cross the border into Malaysia for work, especially when demand for their labour continues to rise. The cycles of recruitment and deportation continue to put stress on local government services already stretched by the large resident migration population.

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<sup>25</sup> In Tanjung Pinang, the practice is for deportees to arrive on a Thursday, and to stay a maximum of three nights (interview with NGO worker, Tanjung Pinang, November 2006).



### **3. Teasing Out the Links**

We noted in our introduction that much of the literature on migration in Indonesia treats internal and international flows of people as separate phenomenon. Our discussion of the Riau Islands demonstrates, however, that within transit zones these categories frequently overlap and individuals may move from one category to the other within a short space of time. The geographical proximity of the Riau Islands to Singapore and Malaysia, combined with the IMS-GT initiative, serves as a magnet for large numbers of internal migrants from throughout Indonesia. While many of these people migrate under formal labour recruitment programmes, many others travel to the islands independently in search of better employment prospects. Significant numbers of these “internal” migrants become international migrants when they cross the border in the hope of finding jobs abroad. The difficulties associated with labelling migrant workers as either “internal” or “international” become even more apparent when we consider the cases of international migrants who spend long periods of time in the islands prior to departure, or who return to the islands between their overseas trips. The cyclical nature of demand for foreign workers in Malaysia in particular means that many of these “international” migrants may in fact settle in the islands rather than returning “home”. Further complicating the distinction between internal and international migration are those groups of migrant workers who move across the border on a daily and weekly basis to work illegally in Singapore and Malaysia. Many of these workers are internal migrants to the Riau Islanders, but make their living as undocumented international labour migrants.

At the same time, however, we recognise that it is important both analytically (and in policy terms) to make a distinction between national and international flows of people. As our discussion of the regulatory frameworks employed by local and national governments has shown, different forms of migration require different policy responses. While both groups of migrants place an enormous strain on services and infrastructure, the needs of both groups are often quite different. Nonetheless, the fluid nature of migration flows in the transit zones means that Indonesian authorities cannot address the needs of these different groups of migrants in isolation from each other. As we have argued, international migration has an enormous impact on life in the Riau Islands. Responding to international migrants as individuals who are simply on their way “somewhere else”, whether that destination be “home” or abroad, ignores the realities of life in the border zone. Similarly, treating internal migrants as either a transitory workforce who will go “home” when the job market shrinks, or as a homogeneous group of settlers who will assimilate into islander life, overlooks the complex character of Kepri’s multi-ethnic population.

The fluid character of internal and international migration in the transit zone also has important implications for Indonesia’s regional neighbours. Our discussion demonstrates that internal migration cannot simply be understood as a matter of national concern to be dealt with by the Indonesian Government alone. As the problems associated with the Asian Financial Crisis illustrate, decisions made by

Singaporean (and to a limited extent Malaysian) investors to withdraw from the Riau Islands had flow on effects on the Singaporean and Malaysian economies. As factories shut down, the mostly single workforce suddenly found itself unemployed and a long way from home. The policy of recruiting staff from other parts of Indonesia, rather than training a locally based workforce, exacerbated unemployment levels. Unable to rely on their extended families, these workers looked for other ways to make a living. Many of them attempted to cross the border, while others found work in the largely illicit informal sector. Singapore and Malaysia stepped up border security efforts and immigration checks in order to cope with the influx of illegal workers and the impact of a growing underworld economy in the islands.

International bordering practices by Indonesia's neighbours can also impact on policymaking by local and provincial authorities. Malaysia's policy of opening and then closing its borders has had an enormous impact on the Riau Islands. As we have discussed, provincial authorities have had to introduce a range of local laws to control population movements into the islands. While these laws are targeted at all arrivals, their primary focus is on individuals who are attempting to use the islands as a departure point for undocumented labour migration to Malaysia. In this case, the Riau Islands' status as a transit point requires a local-level response to an issue that local authorities do not regard as a problem of their own making. The multiple problems associated with policing these laws, together with endemic corruption, have meant that these regulations have had little effect on population movements into and out of the islands. While unemployment levels remain high in the islands, the need to try and control these flows will remain.

#### **4. Conclusion**

The Riau Islands' location on Indonesia's borders with Singapore and Malaysia has significant implications for the province's demographic profile and policies of population control. Like many borderland regions, the islands have experienced rapid social and economic transformation by virtue of their proximity to wealthier economies, particularly Singapore. The growth of manufacturing and service industries in Batam and Bintan as part of the IMS-GT created a demand for labour, and improved transport infrastructure facilitated the movement of people into the islands. Significant numbers of migrants were attracted by the prospect of employment in the export processing zones and resort zones on Batam and Bintan. As economic conditions became more difficult throughout Indonesia as a consequence of the Asian Financial Crisis, the prospect of finding employment in the islands continued to be a major drawcard for internal migrants.

While the islands were initially able to absorb some of these new arrivals, growing unemployment led many of these migrants to consider crossing the border in search of work. They joined many thousands of other hopefuls who arrived in the islands intent on crossing the border illegally. As economic conditions worsened in the islands, earlier waves of labour migrants lost their jobs and joined them. These

groups of potential undocumented workers are not the only international labour migrants to arrive in the islands. In recent years the Indonesian Government has sought to use the islands as a staging post for documented migration flows, particularly through its “one gate programme for domestic workers. The cross-border flows of people have grown even as the geopolitical borders that separate them have become more tangible and more tightly regulated. Although these movements have historical origins, they are also a product of the specific contemporary character of the Riau Islands border zone. Despite increased security concerns and policing of the border zone, the geographical proximity of the Riau Islands to Singapore and Malaysia means that they remain attractive as a place to cross the border as well as a destination in themselves.

As we have argued here the impact of migration on the Riau Islands is a complex phenomenon that cannot be explained with reference to Indonesia’s geopolitical borders alone. An analysis of cross-border economic integration, migrant flows, and the formation of multi-ethnic communities requires an approach which gives attention to different geographical sites (in this case Batam and Bintan islands) and different forms of migration. Our research shows not only that geopolitical borders are not as strong a barrier as is generally suggested in the literature on the Riau Islands, but that these borders are not the only kinds of formal barriers to mobility in the border zone. It is essential, then, to examine the boundaries that define the multiple spaces which constitute the border zone. It is also important to recognise the special character of internal and international migration in transit zones, in which individuals can move from one category to the other very quickly, or belong to both categories at once. These complexities necessitate research and policy responses that take into account the unique character of the transit provinces, and the role that their geography plays in the formation of multi-ethnic communities and the management of migration.

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### About the Authors

Lenore Lyons is director of the Centre for Asia-Pacific Social Transformation Studies (CAPSTRANS) at the University of Wollongong (Australia). She is recognised as the leading scholar on gendered social movements in Singapore, and has conducted extensive research on Indonesian migrant women in Singapore and Malaysia. She is currently working on two Australian Research Council funded projects – one on migrant worker activism in Southeast Asia, and the other on skilled migrant women from Asia living in Australia. She has published widely on the migrant worker activism, the women's movement in Singapore, and cross-cultural feminist methodology. Her publications include *A State of Ambivalence: The Feminist Movement in Singapore* (Brill Academic Publishers, Leiden, 2004), as well as numerous contributions to books and journals: *Asia Pacific Viewpoint*, *Asian Studies Review*, *International Feminist Journal of Politics*, *Women's Studies Quarterly*, *Gender, Technology and Development*, *Citizenship Studies*, and *Sojourn*. E-mail: Lenore\_Lyons@uow.edu.au

Michele Ford chairs the Department of Indonesian Studies at the University of Sydney (Australia), where she coordinates and contributes to the Indonesian language programme and teaches about social activism and human rights in the Southeast Asian region. Her research is focused on the Indonesian labour movement, labour migration and transnationalism. She is currently working on an Australian Research Council funded project that examines union-NGO collaboration on migrant labour issues in five Asian destination countries. She has published widely on labour activism and labour migration, and on the Indonesian province of Kepulauan Riau. In addition, she is co-editor of *Women and Work in Indonesia* (with Lyn Parker) and *Women and Labour Organizing in Asia: Diversity, Autonomy and Activism* (with Kaye Broadbent), both published by Routledge. E-mail: Michele.Ford@arts.usyd.edu.au



## **OPEN FORUM**

### **The End of National Models? Integration Courses and Citizenship Trajectories in Europe**

DIRK JACOBS AND ANDREA REA\*  
*Université Libre de Bruxelles*

*Several European countries have recently introduced, or are planning to introduce, citizenship trajectories (voluntary or obligatory inclusion programmes for recent immigrants) or citizen integration tests (tests one should pass to be able to acquire permanent residence or state citizenship). Authors such as Joppke claim that this is an articulation of a more general shift towards the logic of assimilation (and away from a multicultural agenda) in integration policy paradigms of European states. Integration policies would even be converging in such a fashion that it would no longer make sense to think in terms of national models for immigrant integration. The empirical fact of diffusion of civic integration policies throughout Europe cannot be denied. This paper claims that there is, however, still sufficient distinctiveness between immigrant integration policies in order to continue and use an analytical framework that distinguishes national models.*

**I**n the mid-1990s the Netherlands introduced citizenship trajectories for (non-EU) immigrant newcomers. New immigrants were obliged to take language lessons and a number of introductory courses on the institutions and practices of the receiving society. These courses were paid for by the state. People who refused to take part in these programmes risked penalties. Ten years later the Dutch citizenship trajectory scheme has toughened to a considerable degree. The programme is now even meant to function as a filter for new immigration. Family formation is only possible if the incoming partner first passes a citizenship exam (including a Dutch language test) in the country of origin. Furthermore, candidate migrants have to pay for all the costs themselves. The Dutch integration programme, demanding a considerable amount of acculturation, is currently the strictest in all of Europe. The Netherlands, known and praised in the 1980s and 1990s for its multicultural model, thus seems to have shifted to a more assimilationist position (Entzinger and Fermin 2007).

Since the Dutch have toughened their civic integration programme, several European nation-states and regions seem to have followed suit. The neighbouring Belgian region of Flanders basically copy-pasted the original Dutch citizenship trajectories (*inburgeringstrajecten*) at the start of the new millennium. When Germany introduced *Integrationskurse*, the Dutch programme (partly) served as a model. Since the end of the 1990s, integration courses and citizenship trajectories appear to be emerging all over Europe. France launched *Contrats d'accueil et de l'intégration* and Austria introduced *Integrationsvereinbarungen*, contracts which have become a necessary intermediary step towards entitlement to a long-term residence permit. The UK introduced a citizenship test (on language and knowledge about life in the UK) in order to qualify for British citizenship. Estonia insists that its sizeable russophone minority must first pass an Estonian language and citizenship test before being entitled to Estonian nationality. Poland, Hungary and Spain are contemplating special integration programmes for newcomers. Non-EU member Switzerland is also debating the introduction of *contrats d'intégration*, involving obligatory language courses and civic courses in its cantons. It would be incorrect, however, to think that it was merely the new Dutch model that triggered this wave of integration programmes. The Scandinavian countries Denmark, Sweden and Finland have programmes whose origins predate the Dutch experience.

The rapid diffusion of the idea and practice of integration courses, citizenship trajectories and citizenship tests across Europe provides mounting proof of a convergence in immigrant integration policies, it seems. In a well-written and witty article Joppke (2007) claims that the diffusion of civic integration courses and tests for newcomers attests to a convergent trend in immigrant integration policies. This convergence would make traditional national model assumptions obsolete: "The notion of national models no longer makes sense, if it ever did" (Joppke 2007: 2). We do not propose to throw out the baby with the bath water. In contrast to Joppke, we think that national models, as those proposed by Koopmans et al. (2005), still make sense, albeit that traditional typologies might have to be re-examined. There is indeed some noteworthy convergence in policy towards newcomers, but there is still sufficient divergence in policies towards immigrant ethnic minorities (and related dominant political discourses) across nation-states to continue analytically distinguishing national integration models.

## 1. Citizenship Trajectories and Citizenship Tests in Europe

No less than nine European Union countries have in recent years introduced integration courses, citizenship tests and/or citizenship trajectories as instruments in their civic integration policies for immigrants. Interestingly, EU nation-states are adopting similar integration programmes without involving strictly guided coordination at European level. There is no European directive on integration policy forcing Member States to go in a particular direction. Since November 2004 there is, however, a European Council agreement on "common basic principles" of immigrant integration policy. These common basic principles are formulated in a

rather general way and do not push Member States in a clear manner into particular immigrant integration programmes. One of the principles hints at the possible introduction of “integration courses” and citizenship trajectories:

Basic knowledge of the host society's language, history, and institutions is indispensable to integration; enabling immigrants to acquire this basic knowledge is essential to successful integration.<sup>1</sup>

Where there has been diffusion of “best practices” in the field of immigrant integration programmes within the EU, this has happened organically and not because of clear-cut joint decision-making, not even through the so-called “open method of coordination” (Caviedes 2004). Currently quite a number of EU Member States seem, however, to believe that integration courses are good practice. Instead of wanting to reinvent the wheel, they increasingly look at what is happening across their borders. Instruments such as the Handbook on integration for policy-makers and practitioners (Niessen and Schibel 2004) facilitate cross-national comparison. On this matter the following appears in a report by the French Parliament:

Tous les pays d'immigration sont confrontés, peu ou prou, aux mêmes difficultés. Pourquoi ne pas s'inspirer des bonnes idées, des bonnes pratiques de nos voisins – ils en ont souvent – et de ce qui marche chez eux? Pourquoi ne pas profiter de leur expérience, et même de leurs échecs éventuels, pour éviter les “fausses” bonnes idées? Chaque pays a ses traditions et son modèle en matière d'intégration, et il ne s'agit pas de reproduire mécaniquement ou de “singer” ce qui fonctionne ailleurs, dans un contexte différent. [All countries of immigration are, sooner or later, confronted with the same difficulties. Why not be inspired by the good ideas and good practices of our neighbours – they often have them – and by what works for them? Why not profit from their experience, and possibly even from their failures, to avoid “bad” good ideas? Each country has its traditions and its model of integration, so it is not simply a matter of mechanically reproducing or copying what works elsewhere in a different context.] (Délégation de l'Assemblée Nationale 2006: 12).

We briefly present each of the programmes for immigrant integration of third-country nationals (TCNs) in these countries. In our overview we do not include Estonia, which also has a citizenship test, because the Baltic state is a particular case (in light of the large number of stateless russophones who in our opinion cannot be considered to be immigrant TCNs).

### 1.1. The Netherlands

In 1998 the Netherlands introduced the *Wet inburgering nieuwkomers* (WIN), a scheme of so-called citizenship trajectories (Entzinger and Fermin 2007). Newly

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<sup>1</sup>See European Council press release, 19 November 2004 ([http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms\\_Data/docs/pressData/en/jha/82745.pdf](http://ue.eu.int/ueDocs/cms_Data/docs/pressData/en/jha/82745.pdf)). Other relevant documents on the issue are the Commission's first response to the Basic Common Principles of the Council (COM/2005/0389 final), the Second Annual Report on Migration and Integration (SEC/2006/892) and the European Parliament Resolution on Integration of Immigrants (P6\_TA(2006)0318).

arriving adult non-EU immigrants were obliged to take 600 hours of language courses and courses on “societal orientation”. These courses were financed by central government and the municipalities. If a newcomer did not participate, that person was sanctioned. The aim was to assure rapid independence.

As a result of a new bill, the *Wet Inburgering* (WI), prepared by the centre-right government Balkenende-II since 2003, the citizenship scheme has been substantially altered from January 2007 onwards.<sup>2</sup> The obligation to participate was modified into an obligation to pass a final test. Those failing to pass the test after three and a half years (maximum five years for asylum seekers) are sanctioned and will not be entitled to permanent residence. To pass a (more difficult) language test and a test on Dutch society has equally become a prerequisite for naturalisation. Furthermore, the scheme was broadened to include not only newcomers but equally established immigrant groups not holding Dutch citizenship (and enjoying state benefits). At first, the hard-line right-liberal Minister of Justice and Integration Rita Verdonk – nicknamed Iron Rita – wanted to oblige all immigrants of non-EU origin, even those holding Dutch nationality, to pass the citizenship test. Due to its unconstitutional nature, this aspect of the new bill had to be abandoned by Verdonk. However, unlike in the old WIN programme, people under the new WI programme now have to pay for the courses and tests themselves – albeit that some municipalities will pay the fees for applicants.

A new citizenship test was also introduced for people wanting to come to the Netherlands (for example in the framework of family formation or family reunification) and who needed a residence permit. This new regulation, introduced by the *Wet Inburgering Buitenland*, has been in effect since mid-March 2006. EU nationals, holders of a working permit, temporary students and nationals of a number of non-EU countries (United States, Canada, Australia, New Zealand, Norway, Switzerland, etc.) are exempt from the test. Prospective immigrants first have to pass an automated citizenship test (costing €350) at the Dutch embassy in the country of origin before being (potentially) allowed to move to the Netherlands. A basic knowledge of Dutch is a condition of being granted a residence permit. Candidates can prepare for the test after having acquired course material (€63.90) through Dutch bookstores (via the internet).<sup>3</sup> In the video material footage on gay marriage (and topless women sunbathing at the beach) is shown in order to communicate the message that the Netherlands is a liberal society.

### *1.2. Flanders (Belgium)*

Since the end of the 1990s, the Flemish have been preparing and experimenting with so-called citizenship trajectories (*inburgeringstrajecten*) in which lessons on the Dutch language and lessons of introduction to Flemish/Belgian society are to be taken by certain categories of immigrant newcomers. The aim of the Flemish

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<sup>2</sup> <http://www.hoemoetikinburgeren.nl>

<sup>3</sup> Information on the educational package is available on the Netherlands Civic Integration Examination Abroad website (<http://www.naarnederland.nl>).

Decree on Civic Inclusion (*Inburgering*) is to actively promote a certain degree of language and cultural assimilation. This scheme, copied from the Netherlands, has become compulsory for (most) non-EU newcomers in Flanders from April 2004 onwards and optional in Brussels.

Following a modification of the original decree in 2006, from January 2007 onwards established non-EU origin immigrants, including Belgian state citizens born outwith Belgium, have equally become target groups. For those groups who are obliged to attend citizenship courses (i.e. most non-EU newcomers and refugees) non-compliance can lead to fines ranging from €50 to €5,000. There is, for the moment, only an obligation to participate to citizenship trajectories, not to achieve a certain knowledge level, but the new Flemish decree does foresee that at some point actual tests will be introduced. There are no consequences attached to non-compliance on the level of entitlement to residence permits or nationality acquisition, which are federal Belgian prerogatives. Access to social housing (a Flemish policy-level prerogative) will, following a Flemish decree voted in 2006, in the future be limited to individuals sufficiently mastering the Dutch language or participating in a citizenship trajectory scheme. The Flemish preoccupation with mastery of the Dutch language has to be understood in the light of the ongoing linguistic struggle in federal Belgium between Flemish and francophones.

The Flemish Government sees no contradiction in combining a (more multicultural) targeted ethnic minorities policy with a (more assimilationist) programme for citizenship trajectories, although it has been gradually shifting the emphasis towards the idea of individual responsibility of immigrants. Albeit that this point is debatable, Flanders nevertheless keeps insisting that its civic integration policy is not aimed at “assimilation”:

We want to achieve social cohesion in which everyone's particularity and cultural identity can prosper, but in which the current values, norms and rules of our democratic state and the rule of law, remain the corner stone of Flemish society. The Flemish Government judges it to be important that allochtonous Flemings do not give up their cultural and religious values, but rather integrate these as added values to Flemish society. Respect of diversity is one of the fundamental values of Flemish society: just like the equality of all humans, the separation of church and state and the freedom of expression (Flemish Government 2004: 5).

### 1.3. Germany

Since 2005 a new *Zuwanderungsgesetz* is in place in Germany (Michalowski 2004; Carrera 2006; Joppke 2007). Newcomers can take 300 (to 600) hours of German language classes and 30 hours of lessons on German society (culture, history, constitution, legal system and political institutions). Entitlement to a temporary residence permit depends on participating in the integration programme, while permanent residence requires passing an exam. The programme is obligatory for everyone not showing a minimal mastery of German and/or enjoying social benefits. Failure to attend can lead to a fine or a cut in social benefits of 10 per cent. Non-compliance could lead to non-renewal of a short-term residence permit

or refusal of a long-term residence permit (but a number of exceptions are foreseen). In the (near) future attendance of integration courses and passing of a language test will become a prerequisite for naturalisation. There are also plans to make minimal knowledge of German a condition for family reunification.

**Table 1:** Overview of Characteristics of Civic Integration Policies

	AU	DE	DK	FI	FL	FR	NL	SW	UK
Mandatory for (most) non-EU newcomers	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	No	Yes	No	No
Language training	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Vocational training or orientation	No	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	No
Civic orientation	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
History and culture	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	(Yes)
Courses are free (or minimal cost)	No	No	Yes	(Yes)	Yes	Yes	No	Yes	(No)
Noncompliance fined	Yes	No	(No)	No	Yes	No	(Yes)	No	No
Noncompliance impact on social benefits	No	Yes	Yes	Yes	(No)	No	Yes	Yes	No
Renewal of short-term residence permit depends on participation	Yes	(Yes)	No	No	No	(Yes)	Yes	No	No
Long-term residence permit depends on participation	Yes	Yes	Yes	No	No	Yes	Yes	No	Yes
Test at end of course	No	(No)	Yes	No	(No)	No	Yes	No	(Yes)
Test for long-term residence permit	No	Yes	Yes	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
Test precondition for immigration	No	(No)	(No)	No	No	No	Yes	No	No

Test for naturalisation	No	(Yes)	(Yes)	No	No	No	Yes	No	Yes
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*Note:* AU = Austria, DK = Denmark, DE = Germany, FI = Finland, FL = Flanders, FR = France, NL = Netherlands, SW = Sweden, UK = United Kingdom. A response is in parentheses when the answer is not straightforward due to special provisions (or transitional measures).

#### 1.4. Austria

Austria introduced integration contracts (*Integrationsvereinbarungen*) in 2003 (Michalowski 2004; ICMPD 2005). The programme is obligatory for non-EU newcomers who arrived in the country after 1998. Highly skilled professionals staying for less than two years in Austria and people who can prove sufficient knowledge of German (in a test) are exempt. The signing of an integration contract is a prerequisite for entitlement to a residence permit (or its renewal). The integration programme consists of language and civic education courses and is relatively limited in length (75 hours). About half of the costs are to be paid by the immigrant (or the employer). Alternatively, instead of taking the integration courses, one can pass a language certificate test (*Sprachkenntnisnachweis*). Delays in participation can lead to a halt in unemployment benefits, a shorter duration of the renewed residence permit, a lower participation by the state in the costs for attending the programme or financial fines. Failure to participate within three years leads to non-renewal of the residence permit and even threat of expulsion.

#### 1.5. Denmark

Denmark has had an integration programme since 1986 focused on refugees (Liebig 2007). In 1999 Denmark drastically modified its approach when introducing an Integration Act in which it is stipulated that in order to obtain a permanent residence permit, a newcomer – except when originating from an EU Member State or a Nordic country – is obliged to participate in an introduction programme, especially when depending on social benefits (Michalowski 2004). Newcomers who wish to participate in a language course, but are not part of the target groups, can ask for a financial contribution. From 2004 onwards, language courses are provided on three different levels, with modules of about six months (30 hours a week). The entire programme is meant to be completed in a period of three years and can go up to 2,000 hours of language education. At end of the entire education programme, the newcomers should pass a standardised exam. Active participation in the programme is obligatory for all target groups of the Integration Act. Since July 2003, an adapted programme has been compulsory for all asylum seekers. Non-compliance leads to a reduction of social benefits (up to 30 per cent), which are in fact granted in the form of an “integration allowance”<sup>4</sup>. Furthermore, completion of the introduction programme is a condition for receiving a permanent residence permit. Passing a language test and a test on

<sup>4</sup> In the original plans this integration allowance was meant to be considerably lower than the corresponding welfare benefits that Danes receive, but this idea was dropped after criticism on its discriminatory nature.

Danish culture and history has been part of the requirements for obtaining Danish citizenship since the end of 2005.

Because of the Danish opt-out clause with regard to the Amsterdam Treaty, Denmark is not bound to implement the European directive on the right to family reunification nor the directive on the status of long-term third-country residents. As a result, Denmark has a requirement of seven years of residence for obtaining a permanent residence permit. Furthermore, it has imposed a controversial age limit of 24 years for marriages with third-country nationals, while the European directive on the right to family reunification allows an age limit of only 21. Denmark also imposes a bank deposit (of about €7,400) before family reunification is possible. The country has announced it will, as the Netherlands has done, introduce an integration test as a precondition for family reunification in the future.

### *1.6. Finland*

Finland introduced an Act on the Integration of Immigrants and Reception of Asylum Seekers in 1999 (Michalowski 2004). On the website of the Ministry of Labour of Finland extensive information can be found in English on their integration programme.<sup>5</sup> Newcomers are expected to learn Finnish (or Swedish) and acquire basic information on Finnish society. The individualised programme lasts about 18 weeks and is part of a wider “integration plan”. It is obligatory for unemployed newcomers or newcomers on other social benefit schemes, but not for non-EU newcomers in general. Non-compliance can in some cases lead to a reduction of social benefits. In fact, for the first three years of their stay in Finland, immigrants do not have the right to unemployment benefit, but they do have the right to receive an “integration allowance” in return for participation in the integration programme. Ingrians – a Finnish-speaking minority in Russia – have to prove knowledge of the Finnish language, by passing a test, to make use of their right to migration to Finland.

### *1.7. Sweden*

Sweden has a long tradition of organising language courses for immigrants, dating back to the 1970s. Its current integration programme, offering both language courses and courses on Swedish society, is only compulsory for social benefit applicants. It is open to all types of immigrants, not only to newcomers and is paid for by the state. Municipalities are responsible for offering integration courses, which on average entail 525 hours of study, although this can vary according to the individual situation of the immigrant. Foreigners receiving social benefits can see these being reduced or withdrawn upon failure to participate in language courses, vocational training or orientation courses.

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<sup>5</sup> [http://www.mol.fi/mol/en/04\\_migration/index.jsp](http://www.mol.fi/mol/en/04_migration/index.jsp)



### 1.8. France

In 1998 the socialist government launched the *Plate-forme d'accueil*, a programme meant to help newcomers to understand the different institutions of the French welfare state (Joppke 2007). A voluntary session of half a day was foreseen to explain the functioning of a set of crucial institutions, followed by an individual interview to check whether people had further specific needs. If required, the newcomers could have their language knowledge tested and be directed to information about language courses.

In 2002 a new centre-right government decided to create an alternative programme of *Contrats d'accueil et de l'intégration*, which has been in vogue throughout France since 2005. The programme involves 200 to 500 hours of French language classes and six hours of lessons on the practicalities of life in France (Délégation ... 2006). Newcomers are not obliged to participate, but entitlement to a residence permit does depend on sufficient mastery of French or inclusion in an integration programme. Since 2006, citizenship is granted after a special ceremony but there are no citizenship tests to be taken in order to become a French national.

Interestingly, in an overview report on integration programmes of the Délégation de l'Assemblée Nationale pour l'Union Européenne (2006) it is suggested that France should create a language test as a precondition for family reunification (as in the Netherlands and as announced in Denmark and Germany) and that it should formalise the criterion of knowledge of French for naturalisation through a test.

### 1.9. United Kingdom

In the UK, the Nationality, Immigration and Asylum Act 2002 explicitly introduced a test for residents seeking British citizenship. Applicants should show “a sufficient knowledge of English, Welsh or Scottish Gaelic”<sup>6</sup> and also “a sufficient knowledge about life in the United Kingdom”<sup>7</sup> by passing a test (effectively implemented since 1 November 2005). Those immigrants seeking to settle in the UK (applying for “indefinite leave to remain”) equally have to pass the test (effectively implemented since 2 April 2007). If applicants do not have sufficient knowledge of English, they should attend English for Speakers of Other Languages (ESOL) and citizenship classes. Some categories can get free tuition, but in principle applicants have to pay for the classes, also for the test itself. Home Office explanatory documents stress that the tests aim at “integration”, but without this meaning “complete assimilation” (Home Office 2004: 14). In other words, there is still room for multiculturalism and in order to emphasise this point, reference is made to the particular position of the Welsh and Scottish in the UK:

<sup>6</sup> In practice, this boils down to a test of English. The ESOL Entry 3 level should be attained. This level corresponds broadly to the ability to hold “a conversation on an unexpected topic, that is workable, though not perfect, English” (Home Office 2004: 11).

<sup>7</sup> Further information on the contents of the test may be found at the UK Home Office website (<http://www.lifeintheuktest.gov.uk>).

... So to be British does not mean assimilation into a common culture so that original identities are lost. Assimilation to such a degree has not, after all, happened for most people in Wales and Scotland, nor historically for Irish and Jewish immigrant communities, nor for smaller communities such as the Poles who once fled from persecution. There is no reason why loss of a distinctive identity within a wider British identity should occur to immigrants from the new Commonwealth or from elsewhere (Home Office 2004: 15).

Interestingly, in this respect, questions asked during the citizenship test can vary according to the region (i.e. Scotland, for example, with questions on the Scottish parliament). From a substantive point of view, other than respect for the general principles of the modern democratic state, no specific content is given to the idea of Britishness:

To be British seems to us to mean that we respect the laws, the elected parliamentary and democratic political structures, traditional values of mutual tolerance, respect for equal rights and mutual concern; and that we give our allegiance to the state (as commonly symbolised in the Crown) in return for its protection. To be British is to respect those over-arching specific institutions, values, beliefs and traditions that bind us all, the different nations and cultures together in peace and in a legal order (Home Office 2004: 15).

Any democratic nation-state will basically uphold these general principles linked to the rule of law. More typically – although not exclusive – British elements are the reference to the multinational character of the UK and the idea of allegiance to the Crown.

## **2. Comparative Assessment of Integration Programmes**

We now look into the convergence and divergence of the above-mentioned civic integration policies that we briefly discussed. Table 1 gives an overview of the extent to which the different national policies share a number of characteristic traits. We discuss a number of convergent and divergent traits of these integration programmes,<sup>8</sup> focusing on the following questions:

Is there a form of mandatory participation to integration courses for new non-EU migrants?

Do the integration courses entail language training (2a), vocational training or orientation (2b) and knowledge on history and culture (2c)?

1. Is participation to integration courses free (or not very costly)?
2. Is there a fine in case of non-compliance?

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<sup>8</sup> When the answer relating to a particular question does not easily fit into the forced choice format, we have put the “yes” or “no” answer in parentheses, to indicate that the correct response is rather more complex.

3. Is there a cut in social benefits in case of non-compliance?
4. Is entitlement to a residence permit conditional on participation to an integration course?
5. Is there a test at the end of the citizenship trajectory?
6. Is passing a citizenship or integration test a precondition for permanent residence status?
7. Is passing a test a prerequisite for naturalisation?

An interesting similarity in all countries is that official discourse always denies that the integration courses and citizenship tests are aimed at assimilation. But let us focus on the actual traits and not on the political rhetoric. With the exception of the UK, all the countries mentioned offer integration courses to newcomers. These courses typically entail language lessons and some kind of civic introduction. In a number of countries vocational training and professional orientation are equally part of the programme. While at first most integration programmes were free (or almost free), a number have started asking a fee from participants. Last but not least, one of the most important points of divergence is the voluntary or obligatory nature of the schemes and the consequences of non-compliance.

Analytically a number of general goals of the integration programmes can be distinguished, which are combined in several ways in the different countries and are, hence, not necessarily overlapping. One aim of integration courses is to stimulate socio-economic inclusion and facilitate independence of immigrants. Language courses and vocational training are offered in order to enhance the chances of immigrants in the labour market and limit their dependence on social benefits. In most countries people who are dependent on state social benefits are explicitly targeted to make use of these inclusion programmes and often sanctions are foreseen in case of non-compliance. This is not necessarily a typical trait of immigrant integration policy. In most cases it is an extension of workfare and activation logics, which are more universally present in welfare state arrangements (and equally have an impact on national citizens). They are, however, given a clearer emphasis and visibility where newcomers are concerned. This goal is still the central emphasis of integration programmes in the Scandinavian countries Sweden and Finland, and in the Belgian region of Flanders. They were equally the main focus point of the first citizenship trajectories of Denmark and the Netherlands, but these countries have moved on.

Some states, indeed, go one step further in not only linking participation in integration programmes to entitlement to social benefits, but equally to attach consequences on the level of residence permit. Denmark and especially the Netherlands have adopted the most radical position in this respect. They are using the integration courses (and attached integration tests) as an additional immigration

policy. The Netherlands use the citizenship test for newcomers as an outright and explicit selection criterion for non-EU newcomers, while the Danes have not hidden that their objective is to create obstacles for new immigrants. The position of the French, Germans and Austrians is less radical, but a link is also established between participation in integration courses on the one hand and entitlement to (permanent) residence on the other. Joppke (2007) correctly points out that the obligatory and repressive dimension of civic integration here has to be understood as a response to the fact that immigration to Europe is basically of a non-selective nature (in contrast to the policies of the classic immigrant nations such as Canada, Australia and New Zealand). In the French, UK and Austrian cases the *raison d'être* of the link with residence entitlement is comparable to the link with social benefits: the aim is to discipline newcomers and diminish their dependency on the state welfare system. In the Danish, Dutch and German cases, however, there seems to be an additional goal of acculturation articulated in the content of the integration courses, when stress is equally placed on knowledge of the history and culture of the receiving society.

A third general goal that can analytically be distinguished is the functionality of citizenship trajectories or citizenship tests as prerequisites for nationality acquisition. A certain degree of linguistic assimilation is formally demanded and tested in the UK (and might at one point be introduced in France). Linguistic assimilation plus acculturation is the goal in the Netherlands and seems to be the direction Denmark and Germany wish to follow in naturalisation procedures. In the Dutch and Danish cases, there is an explicit assimilationist dimension. In the UK case it is officially denied that the aim is assimilation, while Germany seems to find itself in an intermediate position.

Some of the above-mentioned countries have only just recently launched their new integration programmes and might well modify them in future years, after evaluation (and depending on partisan positions of the ruling political majorities). It is thus too early to try and pin them down in a clear-cut typology. But there does seem to be a number of divergent tendencies in the underlying philosophies being articulated in the different integration schemes. There is, for example, quite a difference between an integration programme “just” being imposed in the light of a socio-economic activation philosophy (Sweden, Finland) or (also) aiming at other goals such as linguistic assimilation and acculturation as preconditions for residence rights and naturalisation. Joppke claims that the shared feature of civic integration is “that liberal goals are pursued with illiberal means, making it an instance of repressive liberalism”, which would be “gaining strength under contemporary globalisation” (Joppke 2007: 1, 2). That is certainly an interesting point but does it also mean that all integration programmes are basically the same? We think not. Furthermore, does the presence of integration courses in countries such as the UK, the Netherlands and Sweden – in the past traditionally seen as multicultural societies – and in a country such as France, the assimilation-oriented state par excellence, mean that national models are dead? Once again, our answer is negative.

### 3. The End of Multiculturalism?

In *Toward Assimilation and Citizenship*, editors Joppke and Morawska (2003) claim that the rise of civic integration programmes is an articulation of a more general shift towards the logic of assimilation and away from a multicultural agenda in integration policy paradigms of European states. One of the present authors has claimed in the past that the introduction of citizenship trajectories (and citizenship tests) should not necessarily be interpreted as a radical step away from multicultural policies towards assimilation policies, referring to empirical evidence available on the introduction of such schemes in Flanders (Jacobs 2004a). Accordingly, it was argued that the assertion made by Joppke and Morawska that there is an overall decline of official multiculturalism in Europe, and that the introduction of citizenship tests attests to this development, seems to be rather premature.

Jacobs in particular criticised Joppke and Morawska's interpretation of policy changes in the Dutch case. It was argued that one should take into account that the Netherlands no longer has clear-cut consecutive periods of political consensus concerning integration policy but, on the contrary, experiences a continuous struggle between integration discourses of competing political factions (Jacobs 2004b). In other words, integration policy has become much more incoherent and is no longer a clear reflection of one overarching policy paradigm, but much more the reflection of party political power relationships and ad hoc policy compromises. Change is more rapid because the salience of the topic of immigrant integration has increased both for the left and for the right. As a result, Jacobs claimed it is too early to state that the assimilationist policy paradigm has ultimately won the battle in the Netherlands.

As we have seen, the Dutch policy has, however, in the meanwhile undergone such a radical modification that one can, today, speak of a paradigm change towards an assimilationist model (albeit with some elements left over from the multicultural scheme). So here we have to admit that recent history has proved Joppke and Morawska right in the Dutch case. Furthermore, recent policy developments in Flanders have downplayed the multicultural aspects and have upgraded the assimilationist elements of Flemish integration policy, compared with the situation three years ago (Jacobs 2004a).

Does this mean the end of multiculturalism in Europe and a new phase of policy convergence towards assimilation? Not necessarily. We acknowledge that the rapid diffusion of civic integration policies reflects the increasing salience of the political topic of immigrant integration, related efforts of both right-wing and left-wing parties to reposition themselves on this issue throughout Europe and the increasing impact of benchmarking exercises at EU level. At the same time, we claim that this does not automatically lead to the inevitable end of multiculturalism (or other models for immigrant integration).

Vermeulen and Slijper (2003) stress that the ideology of multiculturalism has the rejection of homogenisation and assimilation as its central tenet. If we take this general designation as the main point of reference, then integration courses and citizenship trajectories are clearly not multicultural. Their explicit objective is to achieve a certain degree of homogenisation, civic acculturation and (linguistic) assimilation (for a variety of reasons). However, this definition of multiculturalism is too crude. For the purposes of this paper, we wish to consider the official recognition and endorsement of ethnic and cultural diversity as the central characterising element of policy that could be designated as being “multicultural” (see Vermeulen and Slijper 2003; Jacobs 2004a). Formulated in a less abstract manner, this has a number of policy-making implications: (a) the notion of ethnicity and/or ethno-cultural minorities is used to start with; (b) it is seen to be acceptable and necessary that specific policy is developed for such ethnic minorities; (c) ethnic minorities are allowed to maintain and develop their cultural specificities; (d) host institutions are sensitive to this cultural diversity and – to the extent that this is feasible – modify their procedures and practices in accordance; and (e) ethnic minority groups are allowed and stimulated to organise themselves on an ethnic basis – amongst other things for interest representation.

We do not deny that this multicultural policy framework has been under constant attack and criticism the last couple of years in the Netherlands. It cannot be denied that, especially in the Netherlands, the classic multicultural model has been under substantial strain during the post-Fortuyn and post-Van Gogh period. We readily admit that in some areas former multicultural policies have been downgraded or even withdrawn. Entzinger and Fermin (2007) have in this regard pointed to the abolition in 2004 of education schemes in languages of immigrant groups (*Onderwijs in Allochtone Levende Talen*) and the increasingly critical attitude Dutch policy-makers have taken towards Islamic schools. Furthermore, subsidising of ethnic minority associations has become much more conditional, in stressing the importance of integration effects and intercultural contacts. At the same time, however, in the period following the murder of film-maker Theo Van Gogh by a Muslim extremist in November 2004, the Dutch Government has re-emphasised institutionalised dialogue with ethnic minority associations.<sup>9</sup>

The neighbouring Belgian region of Flanders has introduced Dutch-inspired assimilationist citizenship trajectories for newcomers, but has at the same time still held on to a multicultural policy framework for long(er) established immigrants. In some aspects it was even strengthened. Striking developments in Belgium are the preparations for state subsidising of mosques (payment of imams, costs of buildings) from 2005 onwards – as for churches and synagogues – and the granting of holidays on religious festivities for Jews and Muslims in the Flemish education system. Consultation with immigrant organisation representatives was furthermore intensified in Flanders in several policy domains. Of course, policies are not set in

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<sup>9</sup> For example through the Breed Initiatief Maatschappelijke Binding (BIMB), launched in January 2005.

stone, so there is no guarantee that Flanders will keep on embracing a multicultural model indefinitely (see Jacobs 2004a). But, for the time being, it cannot be claimed that multiculturalism is completely dead in the low countries. Yes, it is in a deep coma in the Netherlands, but in Flanders it still seems to remain alive and kicking.

#### 4. Bringing Back National Models

Institutional approaches to ethnic minority politics, also known as the “political opportunities structure” perspective, are quite popular in the literature on political participation of immigrants. According to Garbaye, a historical institutionalist approach shows “hot institutions function as past political situations frozen in time which may define the possibilities and modalities of later developments” (Garbaye 2005: 211). While the city level has been far from neglected (Penninx et al. 2004; Garbaye 2005), most authors primarily focus on the impact of institutions at the national level. Koopmans et al. (2005), for example, show how national institutional frameworks and dominant discourses on ethnic minorities influence the forms of collective mobilisation by immigrant groups. Inspired by Brubaker (1992), several authors have started to talk about “national models” and have interpreted them as being rooted to an important extent in long-standing national cultural understandings and legal frameworks of national identity, citizenship, and church-state relations (see Favell 1998; Koopmans and Statham 1999; Fennema and Tillie 2004; Penninx et al. 2004; Laurence and Vaisse 2006). As we have seen, Joppke (2007) questions their relevance in claiming that it no longer makes sense to think in terms of national models now that we are confronted with convergence in civic integration policies.

We conclude that distinct national policy traditions and related dominant discourses with regard to immigrant integration have not disappeared, although there are indeed some striking new convergences in particular domains (for example, policy with regard to newcomers) to be noted. Some countries, such as the Netherlands, have indeed witnessed a paradigm shift or have, as Germany, made significant policy changes in particular domains such as naturalisation policy. In quite a number of fields, dominant discourses have, however, remained intact in several countries and existing institutional arrangements still tend to lead to path dependency in policy choices.

Let us take the issues of state/religion relations and space for public expression of a religious belief as an example. As is well known, the Islamic headscarf has been a subject of public controversy across Europe (Verhaar and Saharso 2004; Kastoryano 2006; Bousetta and Jacobs 2006). In all countries that have recently introduced integration programmes and citizenship trajectories, dominant discourses, legislation and policy practices with regard to the wearing of the headscarf have remained fairly stable. In France the headscarf is banned in public schools for pupils and teachers alike. In some German Länder it is prohibited for teachers but allowed for pupils. In the Netherlands and the UK, wearing the headscarf is generally allowed for both pupils and teachers in schools. In Flanders,

schools take a pragmatic view of the headscarf and in general allow it for pupils. In francophone Belgium, however, the French discourse and related institutional ban is being copied. Nothing has changed in this respect since the convergent trend in the development of integration courses.

Another domain in which national institutional traditions and dominant political discourses attest to some cross-national divergence (and national stability), is the field of demography and statistics. The sensitive issue of counting and classifying inhabitants of foreign origin or ethnic background is tackled quite differently across European nation-states. Anyone wanting to perform international comparative research on immigrants or ethnic minorities in Europe is unavoidably confronted with the most diverse types of national statistical data. Several countries traditionally even avoid producing such data. Schematically, two traditions relating to “ethnic statistics” can be distinguished in Europe. In France and most southern European countries, the dominant statistical categorisations merely distinguish individuals on the basis of their nationality. This basically boils down to a limitation to two categories: the national and the foreigner. Often an additional distinction is made among the foreign population between those coming from other EU Member States and those who do not. In contrast, most northern European countries have been producing data on the ethnic and/or foreign origin of their populations in a more detailed manner. The UK, for example, has a system of self-identification of ethnicity, as is the case in the Baltic States. The Nordic countries and the Netherlands keep track of their ‘immigrant population’ by counting the number of persons who have parents (or grandparents) born abroad (and by distinguishing them according to country or region of origin). Interestingly, Belgium is caught somewhere in between these two traditions (Jacobs and Rea 2005).

Partly related to traditions in (not) producing ethnic statistics, there are different traditions in stimulating public acknowledgement and political visibility of ethnic (or ethnicised) identities. In some countries immigrant associations have been financed by the state *because* they are immigrant associations and are seen to be legitimate political actors, whereas other countries consider ethnic and communitarian political identities as something to be avoided. Positive discrimination and affirmative action is applauded in some countries and seen as unacceptable in others. Policy convergence in the field of newcomers’ integration (and anti-discrimination law) has in some cases – notably France – perhaps stimulated debate on the issue of targeted policies, but most countries – with the exception of the Netherlands – have not seen radical modifications in their policies towards settled ethnic minority groups.

Obviously, policies are not set in stone. Discourses which at one point in time were dominant in a particular country can lose appeal. Issues such as access to citizenship or the significance of national identity, for example, can become partisan symbols in political and ideological struggles between political parties. As a result, policies can be modified. One clear example, particularly stressed by



Joppke (2007) is Germany, which overhauled its nationality legislation in 2000 and introduced a form of *jus soli* for immigrant children born in Germany. Joppke also has a point when referring to increased emphasis in linguistic and cultural assimilation of newcomers in many European countries, including the Netherlands and the UK, which traditionally had been relatively forthcoming towards cultural differences. Belgium recently adopted a liberal nationality legislation and granted local voting rights to non-nationals, while this still seemed an impossible political step in the late 1990s (Jacobs 1999). The empirical fact that a number of countries have changed (some aspects of) long standing policies, however, does not mean that the analytical approach of distinguishing political opportunity structures (Koopmans and Statham 1999) or philosophies of integration (Favell 1998), and trying to assess their impact, becomes pointless.

It is true that some of the “crude” classifications of the 1980s and 1990s, for example a very general distinction between a multicultural model and an assimilationist model, are no longer necessarily valid in the new millennium. In a number of countries, integration policies seem to have lost some of their internal coherence, making it more difficult to pinpoint them as clear national models in line with typical philosophies of integration. Furthermore, EU-led convergence in anti-discrimination policies and more organic diffusion of integration programmes across Europe has indeed made EU Member States more similar. We need to re-evaluate our typologies, making use of both theoretical and empirical insights. In order to reclassify countries, empirical projects as the MERCI project (Koopmans et al. 2005), the European Civic Citizenship and Inclusion Index (Geddes and Niessen 2005) and the NATAC project (Bauböck et al. 2006) may be cited as of particular importance in constructing new analytical classifications. For the moment, this exercise has still to be done by the scientific community. We hope that this paper has successfully argued that the diffusion of integration courses and citizenship trajectories throughout Europe should not be interpreted as the sign that such endeavours have become futile. Although integration policies of EU Member States might be converging to a certain extent with regard to incorporation of newcomers, this does not mean that all policies towards ethnic minority groups and immigrants have become indistinct.

## 5. Conclusion and Debate

Interestingly, a certain convergence may be noted in current policies towards newcomers throughout Western Europe. This is not the result of explicit and deliberate EU policy steering. The European institutions have played a crucial role in setting the standards for anti-discrimination policy but, apart from that, have rather limited impact – practically none – on integration policies. Recent convergence of integration policies for newcomers is the result of organic diffusion of policy schemes and visions from one country to another, without EU-guided interference (and not even through the open method of coordination). The diffusion of civic integration policies, in our opinion, reflects the increasing salience of the political topic of immigrant integration and efforts of both right- and left-wing

parties to reposition themselves on this issue throughout Europe, but without this leading automatically to the end of multiculturalism (or other models for immigrant integration). We claim, in contrast to Joppke (2007), that national models such as those proposed by Koopmans et al. (2005) still make sense. There is indeed some convergence in policy towards newcomers, but there is still sufficient divergence in integration policies (and related dominant political discourse) across nation-states to analytically distinguish national integration models. Existing typologies might not be sufficiently adequate but this does not mean that we should now think all integration policies are basically the same. In order to reclassify countries according to their integration policies, empirical projects such as the European Civic Citizenship and Inclusion Index, the MERCI project or the NATAC project may be cited as of particular importance in constructing new analytical classifications (or, indeed, if this were the case, in concluding that analytical distinctions have become superfluous in the light of overwhelming convergence). Without such fine-grained empirical analysis, potentially leading to new classifications of national models, debates about convergence or divergence of integration policies will remain discussions of whether the glass is half full or half empty.

### Note

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### **About the Authors**

Dirk Jacobs is associate professor of sociology at the Université Libre de Bruxelles (ULB) and a member of the Groupe d'Etudes sur l'Ethnicité, le Racisme, les Migrations et l'Exclusion (GERME) of the Institut de Sociologie (ULB, Brussels, Belgium). E-mail: dirk.jacobs@ulb.ac.be

Andrea Rea is associate professor of sociology at the Université Libre de Bruxelles and director of GERME.

## **OPEN FORUM**

### **Daily Life and Social Integration of Immigrants in City and Small Town – Evidence from Norway**

MARKO VALENTA

*Norwegian University of Science and Technology*

*The main argument of this paper is that the city and the small town provide two different contexts for the reconstruction of social life in the period after immigrant resettlement. The social fabric of daily life in small Norwegian towns may be difficult to cope with for many immigrants. Stigmatised immigrants who do not manage to gain access to primary groups of indigenous locals may experience the small-town environment as a very problematic context for identity reproduction. If these immigrants do not manage to be absorbed into the dense sociability of a small town, social exclusion and stigmatisation will be experienced more intensively than in a city. In their view, the city provides a better context for reconstructing social life than smaller local communities. On the other hand, some immigrants may benefit if they settle in a small town. They may experience a strong sense of belonging and being recognised by the mainstream. In emphasising immigrants' social life and the diversity of their experiences, this study not only has relevance for sociological debates about the integration of immigrants, but also has important political implications. Among other factors, it strongly suggests the importance of diversifying integration and settlement policies.*

**T**here is a degree of uncertainty about what kind of settlement is better for immigrants and refugees: scattered or concentrated. On the one hand, the contact hypothesis argues that increased proximity between immigrants and indigenous locals will lead to the growth of respect between them. Furthermore, it suggests that, with dispersion, the contact will increase and lead to faster integration of immigrants and refugees, and that dispersion will at the same time discourage the emergence of socially segregated ethnic communities and encourage inter-individual and inter-group contact across ethnic borders (Brox et al. 1997). These ideas are also implemented in practice. In several European

countries, both central and local authorities, based on their worries about ethnic ghettos, pursue efforts to counteract these tendencies (Bloch and Schuster 2005). The Norwegian and Danish authorities, for example, have proclaimed several times that the geographical dispersal of refugee settlements was the most desirable pattern for this group (Tilia 1999; Djuve and Kavli 2001).

On the other hand, such practices are criticised for neglecting the realities of daily life (Eidheim 1993; Tilia 1999). Western immigrants from certain countries are warmly accepted and enjoy life in Norwegian small towns and villages. At the same time, many non-Western immigrants and refugees dream of moving away from small towns. Studies show that 30–40 per cent of the refugees and their reunified family members who were settled by Norwegian authorities have left the municipality they were first settled in. Eight out of ten Somalis who were settled in northern parts of Norway have moved away from the region. The path of migration is from rural to urban areas and especially to the capital (Brox et al. 1997; Djuve and Kavli 2001). I attempt to make sense of these tendencies in this paper, which is directly related to the discussion on migrant integration in rural and urban areas of new settlement countries addressed in the previous issue of the *IJMS* [9 (2), 2007]. Some of the contributions explore how policy initiatives and the voluntary sector influence the integration of immigrants in rural and urban areas (Jentsch 2007; Findlay et al. 2007). Here I add a socio-psychological dimension to the discussion on integration and settlement of immigrants, exploring how migrants experience Norwegian cities and small towns as different contexts for identity negotiation in everyday life and for the re-establishment of social life. I am particularly interested in one dimension of the immigrants' integration process, that which encompasses their experiences, meanings and strategies while they try to enter Norwegian social networks. Other aspects of integration, in terms of both economic and cultural integration and integration within their own ethnic community, lie outside the primary scope of this study.

After resettlement, most immigrants will try to re-establish themselves in their new environment, *inter alia*, to find a new place in the organisations, institutions and networks of the receiving society. A crucial dimension of these efforts is their desire to rebuild their social life. Among other things, they will try to make new friends and recreate a feeling of belonging and self-worth in their new social environment. These endeavours are the focus of this paper, therefore I explore how different categories of immigrants navigate within rural and urban settings with the aim of reproducing positive identities in interactions and relationships with the ethnic majority.

In my view, the question of how newcomers negotiate and reconstruct their self-identities and relations with others is of high political relevance. Understanding immigrants' day-to-day realities, as well as the social-psychological motives that stand behind different integration patterns, may contribute to improving the quality of policy-making of the host countries. Better comprehension of the local dynamic of immigrants' social life may facilitate modifications of various integration and

settlement initiatives, in order to be more in line with immigrants' and refugees' own motivations, preferences and needs. Interventions that work for one category of immigrant may not have equally positive effects for other categories. If they are not adjusted to the needs and predispositions of different groups and individuals, policies may contribute to isolating immigrants from the hosts rather than bringing them together. In a worst-case scenario, they may lead to resentment and increased feelings of non-belonging, and even to a sense of marginalisation among immigrants. I argue that proximity and scattered settlement in small local communities may indeed catalyse bridging with the mainstream, but only if immigrants have the chance to enter the close-knit networks of indigenous locals. Categories of immigrants who are exposed to xenophobic attitudes will in particular experience problems in gaining access to these networks. If these immigrants do not manage to be absorbed in the dense sociability of a small town, social exclusion and stigmatisation will be experienced even more intensively than in a city.

### **Previous Research**

It is argued that although small Norwegian communities are characterised by lower degrees of social integration than they were before (Villa and Haugen 2005), they still differ in many ways from urban environments. Wadel (1978) for example argues that the social control that characterises small Norwegian towns is a function of their distinctive physical and demographical characteristics. According to him, such characteristics allow people in town to have an overview of what is happening and what other people do.

Generally, the small places are seen as a problematical environment for identity reproduction and social integration of outsiders (Wirth 1969; Wadel 1978; O'Byrne 1997; Høgmo 1998; Ray and Reed 2005). The current members of a person's network are likely to resist any attempted entry by undesirable new members, i.e. people with different values, social positions and ethnicity. Such tendencies may be found both in smaller local communities and in urban environments. It seems, however, that the power social networks have to influence control over patterns of acceptance and integration may be especially strong in the smaller local communities (Wirth 1969). City dwellers do not have such a possibility, because the city is physically large, pluralistic and there are many more people living there. Studies suggest that modern cities are transnational (Smith 2001), international and fragmented (Eade 1997) which, in turn, may influence relationships between newcomers and the established indigenous locals (Høgmo 1998; Appadurai 2003).

We may state that the urban environments and close-knit, socially transparent local communities are different "configurations" which, in different ways, contextualise patterns of relationships between those who are established and those who are newcomers (Abrow 1997). If we refer to a global perspective, the multicultural city and the small town may be seen as two different kinds of "socio-scapes" (Appadurai 2003) or "socio-spheres" (Abrow 1997; Dürschmidt 1997; O'Byrne 1997) that

offer immigrants different possibilities for the reconstruction of communities, networks, friendships and identities. Bauman (1990) articulates these differences when he uses the concept of “dense sociability” (Bauman 1990). He argues that small places are characterised by such “dense sociability”, where people rely on basic binary oppositions in defining each other as either friends or enemies. Unlike the urban context, where the immigrant or refugee may stand outside such binary categories, small places allow people to be defined exclusively as either insiders or outsiders: there is not a lot of room for intermediate and vaguely defined categories when it comes to strangers (Bauman 1990).

The social integration and daily life of immigrants is often related to their settlement patterns and their residential integration and spatial segregation (Satnam Virdee et al. 2006). Residential integration is usually associated with the scattering of immigrants and refugees in areas dominated by indigenous locals. It is argued in several Scandinavian studies that dispersed settlement will not necessarily lead to integration (Brox et al. 1997). These studies argue that under certain circumstances, the result of increased dispersion of immigrants, proximity between the groups and interethnic interaction may generate even more conflicts (Høgmo 1998), that it may increase the experience of isolation among immigrants and refugees (Grønseth 2006) and that it may result in increased secondary migration to the urban areas of the host country (Djuve and Kavli 2001).

It is argued in several studies that migrants will more easily fit in and feel a sense of belonging to an urban environment (Carey-Wood et al. 1995; Eade 1997; Høgmo 1998). That places which appear to be idyllic social environments where everyone knows everyone else can generate a high degree of social exclusion, xenophobia and scepticism against foreigners is not news (O’Byrne 1997; Henderson and Kaur 1999; Neal 2002). For example, several Norwegian researchers have shown that the most intense clashes between xenophobic locals and newcomers have taken place in small Norwegian towns (Eidheim 1993; Øvreliid 1997; Klepp and Roppen 2003). According to their studies, small towns may be understood as moral communities characterised by dense social networks that support conformity and suppress cultural diversity. According to these, and other, studies, relations in local communities between immigrants and the indigenous local population may seem superficially harmonious, but underneath the surface there often lurks currents of antipathy towards and gossip about immigrants (Øvreliid 1997; O’Byrne 1997; Høibo and Høibo 2002; Grønseth 2006).

On the other hand, several researchers have shown that some immigrants may benefit if they settle in a small town (Tilia 1999; Brox et al. 1997). It seems that the dispersion of immigrants across the country may in some cases indeed accelerate their bridging to the mainstream. In order to be accepted in small Norwegian communities, immigrants have to enter deeply into the full complexity of local relations and networks. Such pressure sometimes indeed results in increased participation and an inclination for melting into the mainstream. However, this does not mean that dispersion automatically leads to increased social integration



(Tilia 1999). Dispersion may also slow down or even hinder immigrants and refugees' social integration process. Physical proximity is just as likely to strengthen as to diminish immigrants and refugees' experience of social exclusion, stigma and misrecognition (Høgmo 1998).

When we explore immigrant social life in different spatial contexts, the distinguishing characteristics of urban and rural contexts should be linked to a general context of reception. According to Portes and Zhou (1993), the context of reception matters for immigrants' integration process, *inter alia*, degree of governmental assistance given to immigrants. In addition, the host society's attitudes toward different immigrant groups affect how they integrate in the host country. Moving country can disrupt anyone's social life. However, it is not difficult to imagine that it will be more difficult to become a part of the mainstream for those categories of newcomers who are subjected to strongly prejudiced attitudes (Portes and Zhou 1993; Portes and Rumbaut 2006). According to Portes and Zhou (1993) we may, *inter alia*, distinguish between strongly prejudiced, weakly prejudiced and non-prejudiced context of social reception. As will be seen, although all informants in my study were recognised by the Norwegian authorities as legitimate refugees, and received generous resettlement and welfare assistance, some of them were accepted more easily in the small towns than others. Certain stigmatised categories of immigrants may indeed consider small local communities as closed, xenophobic social environments.

## Methods and Sample

Given the focus on immigrants' voices, the data is mainly gathered through qualitative interviews with them. Other methods of gathering empirical data, such as from observations, are also used. Forty-three immigrants were formally interviewed. The data material is based on information gathered from immigrants (with refugee background) from three countries: Croatia (mainly Serbs from Northern and Eastern Croatia), Bosnia (Croats, Serbs and Muslims) and Iraq (mainly Kurds from Northern Iraq). Thirty lived in Trondheim at the time of the interviews.<sup>1</sup> The rest of the informants lived in small local communities: Sandnessjøen, Stjørdal and Kongsvinger.<sup>2</sup> The oldest informant is 65 years old, while the youngest is 17. Most informants are between 30 and 45 years old. Twenty-one of them are men, and twenty-two are women. The main reason why I do not focus solely on one ethnic group is because I want to highlight differences and similarities between various categories of immigrants, regarding their network affiliations and their experience and mastering of everyday life. These particular

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<sup>1</sup> Eight of those who lived in Trondheim at the time of the interviews had lived in various small towns in Norway before they settled in the city.

<sup>2</sup> Sandnessjøen is a small town in northern Norway, while Stjørdal is a small town near the city of Trondheim. Kongsvinger is small town in south-eastern Norway. When I speak about the social life of immigrants in small towns, I refer primarily to the experiences and networks of immigrants who live(d) in towns with 4,000–6,000 inhabitants. When I speak about the city, I primarily refer to the experiences and networks of immigrants who live in Trondheim (c. 160,000 inhabitants).

immigrants (from ex-Yugoslav republics and Iraq) were also chosen because they represent some of the largest first generation immigrant groups in Norway.

The selection of informants was based on observations and discussions with informants and gatekeepers. Informants were mainly mobilised with the help of my key informants and by using a “snowball method” where one informant directed me to a second, the second to a third, etc. In this way, I established an extensive chain of contacts. The snowball method began from several entering points, which resulted in several chains. In this way, I ensured variation within the data. During my fieldwork, I also tried to achieve variation with respect to various types of relations and situational contexts that framed different interactions.

### **General Patterns and Different Day-to-Day Realities**

In what follows, I argue that it may be difficult for immigrants and refugees to reconstruct social life in Norwegian small local communities. However, relations between the size of the place one lives and the social life of immigrants is not straightforward, even if it is true that most immigrants and refugees may experience small places as a problematical environment for identity reproduction and social integration.

The most positive and the most negative stories about social inclusion and exclusion were told to me by immigrants who had lived in small Norwegian towns. On the one hand, several of the immigrants in the study who lived or still live in small Norwegian towns have provided some of the most striking stories, reflecting strong feelings of stigma, social exclusion and loneliness. On the other hand, I met immigrants in small Norwegian towns who strongly emphasised how happy their relations with indigenous locals were. They found that such places were warm, inclusive, environments where they were well protected from day-to-day racism and ethnic discrimination.

Those variations can be explained with reference to many factors. Several processes may influence immigrants’ ethno-social preferences and practice: their relation to the home country; their individual capacity and human capital, their economical situation in exile; attitudes of the hosts; assistance provided by the public systems of the receiving country, etc. Immigrants in my study have several things in common. For example, all informants have been accorded asylum/refugee status in Norway which confers such rights as access to work, generous resettlement and welfare assistance, and extensive language training. Another factor they share in common is that none of them received any significant assistance in terms of re-establishing their social networks. Nevertheless, it was easier for the Bosnians and Croats to integrate than for the Iraqis, both in economic and cultural terms: this in turn influenced the quality of their everyday life. We may mention three main factors that propel this difference.

Firstly, Bosnians and Croats had fewer problems with official recognition of their educational qualifications and in finding comparable professional positions. Some even achieved, or re-established themselves in, prominent occupational positions, such as doctors, researchers, engineers, etc. They managed to attain a high status, at least in one arena of their social life. These people appeared more content with social life. They were also more self-confident in interactions and relations with indigenous locals.

Secondly, most of my informants from the former Yugoslavia were able to see similarities between their life in the home country and their life in Norway. Although there were certain differences between Norwegian culture and their own culture, in their opinion these were possible to overcome. Unlike them, Iraqis primarily focused on differences. They spoke about how difficult it was to accept certain aspects of Norwegian culture.

Thirdly, some ex-Yugoslavs also experienced that their identity slightly improved in the eyes of indigenous locals. For example, the mass medias' positive focus on Croatia as a tourist destination made that their identity improved in the eyes of indigenous locals. Furthermore, the focus in the mass media on Muslim fundamentalism and terrorism, have affected different immigrants in different ways. Anti-Muslim xenophobia affected primarily Iraqis since their arrival almost coincided with the 9/11 attacks and the start of "the war against terror". Prejudices about Muslims also existed when Bosnians arrived in the middle of the 90ties, but were not as strong as anti-Muslim xenophobia that came afterwards. Generally, Bosnians and Croats, with their European appearance were seen by locals as less culturally distant than Iraqis. Unlike Iraqis, they somehow did not fit in with Norwegians current stereotypes about Muslims.

In this light we may look at immigrants' opportunities to gain access to primary groups of indigenous locals in small Norwegian towns. Indeed, compared with my Iraqi informants, Croats and Bosnians I met were more easily accepted in Norwegian small local communities. This is not to say that, for many of them, they never experienced stigmatisation, xenophobic attitudes and marginalisation in relation to indigenous local networks. Indeed, I also met immigrants from former Yugoslavia who experienced small towns as cold and xenophobic and dreamed about moving to the city.

### **Social Incorporation in City and Small Town**

My informants believed that established networks hindered indigenous locals from developing friendships across ethnic division lines. This is especially the case where a negative discourse about certain immigrant or refugee groups has already been established among members of the indigenous local population. Within the context of the small town, a Norwegian who wants to extend their relations with an immigrant has to take into consideration what friends and others in the local community might think. For example, I have met Norwegians who suffered

negative reactions in their town because of socialising with immigrants in their role as refugee-guides.<sup>3</sup> People who work with recruiting new people in the programme suspected that such reactions might partly explain why it was difficult to recruit new guides in some local communities. Small Norwegian towns have few public arenas where people may socialise within an environment characterised by dense sociability. In such environments, people have more chance if having their activities monitored. When the social life of an individual is also unframed by a dense network of friends and acquaintances who have a long common history,<sup>4</sup> it will be much more problematic, both in a social and a psychological sense, to establish and maintain friendships with people who deviate from the rest of the network. As a result, well-integrated indigenous locals may be reluctant to become involved with outsiders. In short, they prefer their own kind – people they can identify with, and with whom they have relationships at many levels. In such contexts, indigenous locals who decide to be together in public with newcomers must feel confident and secure that they will fit into their existing web of social relations.

Conversely, larger urban contexts, characterised by greater degrees of multicultural diversity, may seem like less problematic social environments for immigrants. Among other things, immigrants may rearrange their social life within previously established compatriot networks and institutions that already exist in the major Norwegian cities. Especially immigrants who do not have the motivation, opportunity or capacity to interact with Norwegians in a satisfying, self-confirmative manner seem to prefer living in the city. Stories of my informants suggest that the city's institutional, territorial and ethnic diversity allows immigrants to minimise the possibility of unpleasant contacts with indigenous locals. Immigrants who live in the city can carry out most of their daily tasks within the frames of international networks and institutions. Even when immigrants encounter members of the ethnic majority in the city, their chances of doing so within frames that ensure them a more favourable situational identity are improved. They may even constitute a majority of their own in certain neighbourhoods, arenas and situations. A number of ethnic associations, ethnic restaurants, cafés, discotheques, shops, dancing courses, hair salons, etc allow immigrants the possibility of reconstructing their social life (and interacting with compatriots and indigenous locals) within the arenas, institutions and networks where social norms of conduct are defined by themselves. The story that follows nicely illustrates these possibilities:

When I am in the restaurant, I used to take the initiative. They eat oriental food and listen to our music. They ask about help and advice. I almost feel that it is cool to be a foreigner. I would feel differently if I worked in some Norwegian restaurant ... I will never do that either. I prefer to go to places where there are many foreigners. I feel more relaxed there. In such cafés and restaurants people

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<sup>3</sup> Refugee-guides are volunteers from local communities who are coupled with refugees on an informal basis. The Refugee-guide initiative is organised by the Norwegian Red Cross.

<sup>4</sup> They are born in the same place, went together to the same kindergarten, the same school, etc.

use many languages. Norwegian girls also used to come, but they have to adjust. They sometimes have to speak English, for instance (Iraqi man).

The quotation indicates how the multicultural urban context may influence self-presentation and identity negotiation among immigrants. The informant expresses his preference for venues that are mainly frequented by a foreign clientele, since the ethnic minority then becomes the cultural majority, and Norwegians have to assume the minority role. In these arenas, immigrants are given the opportunity to reproduce positive identities because they have the power of defining what the right code is in these contexts. But such arenas do not have the same power to influence in the smaller Norwegian towns. In small towns, ethnic networks, institutions and arenas (such as, for example, ethnic restaurants, clubs and organisations) do not seem to immigrants to be a sufficient source of social integration. Immigrants and others tend to see their connections to them as primarily symbolic gestures. As we shall soon see, immigrants who live in small towns also have to enter deeply into primary groups of indigenous locals if they want to be included and accepted by them as ‘one of us’. Therefore, immigrants may be reluctant to be associated with ethnic institutions and networks that exist in the towns. Joining such organisations and networks runs the risk of actualising differences from the indigenous locals. On the one hand, it has the effect of emphasising ethnicity, which may cause further distance from the hosts: on the other, it may not provide the immigrant with enough compensation in the form of in-group integration.

### **“Passing”, Day-to-Day Reality and the Context of Awareness**

A lower grade of social transparency is another reason why several of my informants preferred cities to small towns. The stories of my informants suggested that certain categories of immigrants felt too visible in small towns. Among other things, in such places, the opportunities for managing information – for example by “passing” and “covering” (Goffman 1963) – are considerably reduced. These strategies are an important way of coping with ethnic discrediting in everyday life. When this possibility is limited, it may leave immigrants feeling exposed and therefore intensify the feeling that their ethnicity is a disadvantage. It seems that successful passing presupposes a specific context of interaction.

To immigrants, smaller local communities are open contexts where the inhabitants know a great deal about them. In the small Norwegian towns, both immigrants and locals are very visible when they are out in public. When people in such places meet an outsider, they start to wonder about that person’s presence, and may ask each other about who the person is, where she comes from, why she is here, etc. Indigenous locals soon know a lot about a person. In such contexts, it is pointless (or directly counter productive) to pass oneself off as somebody else.<sup>5</sup> We may say, paraphrasing Goffman, that in such contexts it is difficult to hide discrepancies

<sup>5</sup> As already illustrated, such disclosures may lead to new discrediting.

between the “virtual” and the “real” identity (Goffman 1963). Even immigrants who are physically undistinguishable from the indigenous local population cannot pass as Norwegians in everyday life when most people in the local community know their real identity. The story that follows again illustrates these differences.

When I was in Trondheim, I heard that some boys used to say that they were from Italy or Spain when they picked up Norwegian girls. It is impossible to do this here. Everyone knows who we are, and why we are here... Everyone knows that we were living in the refugee camp just a few years ago. When something negative happens in the reception camp, I feel that people here look differently at me already the day after (Iraqi man).

While local communities seem to be ‘open awareness contexts’, many public places and arenas in cities seem to be “closed awareness contexts”.<sup>6</sup> For many immigrants, strategies whereby they directly or indirectly suppress information about themselves are a part of their day-to-day reality in cities. In most situations, immigrants who live in the city encounter people who are complete strangers to them and who know nothing about them. They encounter people who as immigrants they are unlikely ever to meet again. In other words, they encounter the hosts in contexts where their virtual identities are much easier to reproduce. Because of this, immigrants may behave more confidently in many public encounters, since they know that their real identity and biography will not be actualised.<sup>7</sup>

It is nice to blend in when I am in the city. I found out that as long as I do not speak most people think that I am Norwegian. It is quite a relief...Here, everyone knows who I am and where I come from...People here know that I am an immigrant and a Muslim. I cannot say that this improves my image (Bosnian man).

The feeling of relief that came with being able to merge anonymously into public life in the city is given clear expression here, and is similar to experiences reported by several informants. It seems that this sense of relief from blending in can also be found among visible immigrants who do not want to pass or who cannot suppress their ethnic markers in public.

People in small places are not used to new things...They get their information about foreigners through the mass media. They have never spoken with immigrants, Muslims or asylum seekers in their life, but they have clear ideas about them. People in cities have seen all kind of foreigners in various situations... People in cities frequently visit foreign restaurants and stores. They

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<sup>6</sup> Glaser and Strauss (1981) distinguish between several awareness contexts. The core of the distinction may be formulated as follows: interactants are ignorant of others’ identities in the closed awareness context; in the open awareness context, each interactant knows the identity of the other, and their own identity as the other sees it (see also Hewitt 2003; Stone and Farberman 1981: 53–63).

<sup>7</sup> Differences in opportunities for “passing” and “covering” between the city and the small town were especially emphasised among refugees who could pass as Norwegians or as “high-status foreigners” in everyday life.

are used to foreigners...I found the small places to be closed and xenophobic (Iraqi man).

People in urban environments characterised by diversity are used to meeting and seeing people who are strangers. Unlike the city, where immigrants become a part of the urban crowd and may achieve a less stressful anonymity, in smaller communities they will be more visible, and the objects of negative attention.

In short, we may say that both the visible and invisible minorities seem to prefer urban, multicultural city contexts. The 'invisible' immigrants prefer the city because it is easier to manage information about themselves. The visible immigrants prefer the city because its diversity and multiethnic character gives them an opportunity to merge and to be different without arousing too much attention (Høgmo 1998). In such a colourful environment, visible minorities become less visible in relative terms. As one of Høgmo's informants puts it: "Black people are a common sight in Oslo. I was not stared at in Oslo in the way that I am here in Bodø. It is an unpleasant feeling to be seen as a strange animal when one actually is a human being" (Høgmo 1998: 68).

### **Combining Internal and External Integration in City and Small Town**

Feelings of non-belonging in relation to mainstream society and a general sense of loneliness may sometimes be reduced or compensated for by stronger integration within the immigrant's own ethnic community. Therefore, in cases where immigrants experience social marginalisation and ethnic stigma in their everyday life, it is especially important for them to have opportunities for compensation in the form of integration within an ethnic community or ethnic network. It seems clear that the possibilities for combining internal and external integration in this way are markedly different when it comes to small towns and large cities. The small town emerges as a narrow social environment, which restricts an immigrant's chances of bonding with their compatriots in addition to bridging with their Norwegian friends. Such narrow constraints hold true for both Norwegian and ethnic networks.

There are several reasons why the Norwegian cities provide better opportunities for combining internal and external integration. The most obvious one is that Norwegian cities have larger ethnic communities than small towns. To recap: even if ethnic communities are to be found in a given town, they will usually be very small. For example, the largest immigrant communities in Trondheim, Bergen and Oslo numbered several hundreds, even several thousands people, while in the small towns that I visited, immigrant communities sometimes amounted to fewer than twenty individuals with a common background. Thus, even if there are persons who belong to the same ethnic group, this does not necessarily mean that the ethnic community gives an immigrant a proper opportunity for affirmative identity reproduction and social integration.

Several families from ex-Yugoslavia lived in the town. Two of them were our friends, but these people moved to the south. I did not manage to become friends with the other ex-Yugoslavs in the town. We were simply too different. I actually tried to avoid them (Bosnian woman).

Due to the small size of the ethnic community, immigrants and refugees will have less opportunity to find like-minded persons who belong to their ethnic group. Furthermore, in such a small place, ethnic communities are sometimes characterised by strong social control. The following story reflects exactly this.

I like to socialise with my compatriot friends, but I do not like all of my compatriots. I do not want to be involved in certain Bosnian cliques ... It is certainly much more difficult to avoid people who you dislike when you live in a small town. In the small town where I lived, there were maybe fifteen Bosnian families, so of course everyone knew everyone and you met them all the time. Here in Trondheim, the situation is completely different (Bosnian woman).

The immigrants who live in a small town have to deal in accordance with the narrow frames of its arenas, institutions and networks. If the ethnic community is also segregated from the rest of the local community, immigrants may additionally experience it as closed and suppressive. The city, on the other hand, permits immigrants to be more selective about their in-group contacts. The city is normally characterised by large ethnic networks and international institutions which allow immigrants greater freedom of choice and the possibility of different types of social incorporation. As the last informant implies, the size of the ethnic community combined with the general extent of the city gives immigrants better opportunities for choosing between different people: it also allows them the possibility of involving themselves with certain members of the ethnic community without the risk of having to relate to (or be controlled by) compatriots who they do not want to socialise with.

### **The Constraining Transparency of the Small Town**

Separating interactions and relations with Norwegians and interactions and relations with their compatriots is one self-work strategy immigrants can use to obtain individuality and maintain coherent synchronic identities. Several informants expressed the sense that it is more difficult to prevent information spreading to different parts of their network in a small town. Because of the constraining transparency of the small town, if an immigrant socialises with compatriots there, this may be easily observed by the Norwegian part of the network. In the city, it is easier to maintain close relationships with compatriots without jeopardising their self. The territorial differentiation and low transparency of the city may improve an individual's chances of socialising with different kind of people. Unlike the city, the fewer arenas of the small town may force the immigrant to choose a side, because in smaller communities, people lead their lives largely in one another's presence.



Three new families from Croatia and Bosnia settled in town. I was happy. I missed the company of my compatriots. At last I could have friends from my home country...I remember that we were in a café and spoke our mother tongue. Several of my Norwegian friends and acquaintances come into the café, but they left us alone. They just greeted us and went away to find a table in another part of the café. I realised that if I started to socialise more often with my compatriots, I would isolate myself from the Norwegian community (Bosnian man).

As the informant makes clear, being in the company of one's compatriots may reverse the immigrant's individual attempts to integrate within the social life of the town. If immigrants who had begun to gain entrance into primary groups of Norwegians continue to socialise with their compatriots within the few arenas of the town, they may jeopardise their external networking. Each time they are seen with their compatriots, they signal to their Norwegian friends that they are members of a distinct alien group and not "one of us".

Several times, I heard my Norwegian friends react negatively when they saw groups of immigrants in town. They speak about 'them' and 'us' and make many strange assumptions about these people, forgetting that I too am an immigrant... I know that if I start to socialise with my compatriots more often in public, local people, including my Norwegian friends, will notice this (Bosnian woman).

The narrowness of the context does not allow immigrants to have fully separate relations with their compatriots and hosts. In company with their compatriots, they are not only excluded from communication with their Norwegian contacts when they meet them, but also risk being perceived on the basis of their collective identity. Several immigrants in the study were concerned about the possibility of a relapse in the way that they were interpreted by their hosts. Some of them have invested a lot of energy in making a breakthrough in their relations with indigenous locals. They did not want to spoil all that work.

If I went out with my Iraqi friends to the café, I knew that we would be perceived by Norwegians as some sort of clan or gang. I knew that none of my Norwegian friends would join me when I met them. If I decided to be with my compatriots all the time, I would lose my Norwegian friends (Iraqi man).

There are several motives for clustering in an ethnic community, but there are also several motives for keeping one's distance from one's own ethnic group. Immigrants have a vested interest in dissociating themselves from people they consider to be the less desirable members of their ethnic community: they worry about being subjected to social control, or the negative impact on their pursuit of individuality, respectability and a more favourable social identity. Established immigrants may also find that their situation worsens with the arrival of newcomers. These concerns may partly explain why immigrants in smaller local communities may have negative attitudes towards newcomers. Attitudes toward immigrants and refugees can change over night in small towns. Whereas the city is characterised by low transparency, small towns are such that the negative actions of a single foreigner are soon known. Such incidents may change the indigenous population's attitude towards the group. Knowing that their collective identity is

very vulnerable in such a narrow context, established immigrants and refugees will not only be anxious about how the other members of the group living in that town behave, but may also distance themselves from them in order to protect the self-image they have in the eyes of indigenous locals.

### **Immigrants who Experience Small Towns as a Protective and Inclusive Social Environment**

The variations in experiences prevent us from drawing absolute conclusions about the opportunities and restrictions immigrants have for identity reproduction and social integration in small towns. However, this does not mean that we cannot argue that small town and cities provide different contexts for reconstructing social life after resettlement. We should instead accept that the conventional view of how immigrants and refugees integrate in cities and small towns is not sufficiently nuanced. Unlike descriptions that describe meetings between local communities and migrants in more general terms, my material suggests that we have to distinguish between different realities and categories of immigrants. For example, Bosnian and Croatian immigrants who were admitted to the primary groups in a local community experienced the small town as a supportive and friendly environment. Once people in the small town accept an immigrant, he or she may experience this acceptance quite strongly in their everyday life. I had the impression that the same processes that cause and perpetuate feelings of exclusion can change in nature and produce feelings of inclusion that are just as strong.

Social density in small towns makes the social life of those who live there common knowledge. Immigrants may well find this aspect of the small town suppressive. On the other hand, if a few well integrated indigenous locals start to define an immigrant as a social resource and accept this person, the immigrant will soon be known and introduced to other indigenous locals. This does not necessarily mean that the immigrant will then establish close relations with all these people, but they will know and recognise that person as a member of the community.

People in the town are not suspicious of me. Everyone here knows that I am a foreigner, but all of them know that my family contributes to this community in several ways. I am not seen as an intruder anymore. It is important to me that people know who I am and where I work and who my friends are. Most of the people I meet on my daily rounds know my name (Bosnian man).

Immigrants and refugees who have established friendships with Norwegians frequently meet them in the few arenas that are available in a small town. An important part of their everyday reality will therefore consist of interactions with hosts whose evaluations of them will be based on their personal identity. For example, one Iraqi refugee told me that almost every time he went to the café there was someone there who knew him (friends, workmates etc) and who asked him to join him and who introduced him to other people. He said that after some time, almost everyone knew him personally or at least knew who he was and where he worked. This kind of experience is also reflected in the following account:

People get more out of friendships in a small town. This has maybe something to do with the fact that we meet each other several times during a single day. We get more out of friendships. I had a feeling that I was a part of that community... I simply felt accepted and liked by locals (Croatian man).

As immigrants in small towns meet their Norwegian friends, workmates and acquaintances within the contexts of dense sociability, these relationships have more of an impact on their day-to-day reality. When they establish personal relations with Norwegians in a small town, these relations will be a significant source of positive feedback in their everyday lives. Locals will greet and chat casually with them when they meet in town. They will introduce them to others, with the result that they will be recognised and accepted by this new acquaintances as well, widening the circle of familiarity. Friends will also inform other people about the immigrant, reporting whose friend he or she is, and what their qualities are. In other words, the immigrant will become part of a circle where “everyone knows everyone” in the small town. Immigrants gradually get the chance to participate in the small, polite, rituals of everyday life – but on a personal level, and not as anonymous members of an out-group.

When I walk back home after work, I often meet at least ten people who I greet or have a brief chat with. Almost everyone knows who I am. They know my name, who my wife is, where I work, etc. I know the same about them. Of course I feel that people here have accepted me...We have not experienced racism or ethnic discrimination. The reason why I am so different from some of your other informants may be explained by the fact that we have lived in such a small town (Croatian man).

During my fieldwork, there were several occasions when I accompanied this informant in the town where he lives. We frequently met his Norwegian friends and acquaintances. From the post office to the barber-shop, from the restaurant to the shopping centre, from the petrol station to the occasional encounters with friends and acquaintances at the street, he often stopped for a casual chat or to exchange greetings with people who knew him personally. They waved, nodded, tooted or flashed their headlights – as they would when greeting friends and acquaintances. All of these interactions would clearly have an impact on the immigrant’s everyday experience, and on his sense of belonging and recognition. Most immigrants and refugees who rebuild their social life in Norway will face many challenges. However, some have a harder time than others. It is not difficult to understand that people like the above informant were in a uniquely privileged position.

### **Partial Inclusion in the City: Knowing and Unknowing**

The degree to which one is included in the mainstream may differ between the city and the small town. In the city, even the most integrated immigrant may risk everyday experiences that undermine her or his feeling of being accepted and respected by indigenous locals. This finding may be partly explained by the fact that even the most integrated immigrants who live in the city risk being seen in

public life on the basis of their ethnicity only. Unlike immigrants who experienced a breakthrough in social relations with indigenous locals in the context of the small town, they do not have frequent or even occasional meetings with their friends in various public arenas. On the contrary, such encounters are usually with people who do not know anything about them and their biography. Even well integrated immigrants (including those who have achieved a prominent position within the host society) will still be forced to participate in many occasional interactions with people who perceive them in a one-dimensional manner, and primarily as foreigners. Consequently, an important part of the day-to-day reality of these people is still characterised by ambivalence about how others perceive, and respond to, their ethnic signs. One informant summarised his experiences of life in a city and in a small town in the following way:

I miss all the things that you can do in the city. It is overwhelming to see all these people, stores, cinemas etc. I miss all that ... However, many things are better in the small town. I know nearly everyone here and they know me. I feel at home here. If I go outside, I meet people who I know. There are always some colleagues from work, pupils of mine or their parents who greet me...The situation is different in the city. People do not know you. They see that you are a foreigner ... They followed me in the stores. Maybe they thought that I would steal something ... Once I was even stopped in the middle of the street in Oslo by policemen who asked me to show my ID card. There are many illegal immigrants in Oslo so they often check people who look like foreigners ... Such a thing would never happen here because people know me. When I am here, I almost forget that I am a foreigner (Bosnian man).

This story serves as a useful reminder that different degrees of the “knowing and unknowing” characterise life in the city and the small town.<sup>8</sup> It is important here to stress that the degree of “knowing and unknowing” has different importance for different strategies. In open awareness contexts, immigrants who want to pass or cover will find such “knowing” environments problematic for reproducing their virtual identities. In contrast, immigrants who have achieved a certain degree of acceptance and recognition from indigenous locals, will find the degree of “unknowing” to be problematic. If the immigrant can be distinguished from Norwegians, then others will not know who this person is: to them, the person will be a low-status foreigner, who will be judged on appearance, ethnic markers, speech or behaviour.

In an urban context, it is simply not possible for everyone to know everyone else. In the city, the degree of unknowing will be stronger due to the large size of the population, no matter how many Norwegians the immigrant knows. Therefore, if they are visible immigrants, and in that sense discredited, they will still be forced to continuously evaluate whether these strangers look at them via the ethnic lens. If they are invisible minorities and in that sense discreditable, they will still have reason to be conscious of discrepancies between their real and virtual identity.

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<sup>8</sup> I refer here to Goffman's (1963) distinction. Like Glaser and Strauss (1981), he distinguishes between several awareness contexts, *inter alia*, between “known and unknown people” (strangers).

It is important to emphasise that an absence of ethnic discrediting, and an accompanying sense of inclusion in the small town community, such as is outlined in several of the accounts above, does not dominate my material. Among immigrants I met who had lived in small towns, it was primarily younger people, and especially younger couples with children who came from urban areas of Bosnia and Croatia, who managed the greatest degrees of social integration and bridging to the mainstream. In other words, the most successful people were those whose appearance and lifestyle were almost identical with those of indigenous locals. Natives not only perceived them as being quite similar, both culturally and physically: it also turned out that these persons in one way or another also appeared as resources for the community and for indigenous locals they knew.

In contrast to the impressions of those immigrants who managed to enter the primary groups in a small town, other immigrants either dreamt about leaving the town or had already moved away. These people did not manage to become a part of the local community. Feelings of non-belonging, stigma and exclusion were especially strong among immigrants and refugees who were unemployed and perceived as too different by the local population. I interviewed several immigrants from this category who moved to the city. Although their relocation did not necessarily result in a higher degree of bridging with Norwegians, their stories suggested that in the city they experienced a lesser sense of being outsiders in relation to the Norwegian mainstream compared to the time they lived in the small town. The stories of these people not only highlighted how difficult it is for someone who is perceived as too different to gain admittance into primary groups of natives in small towns. Interviews with that category of immigrants also made me think again about social exclusion in relative terms.

### **Experiences of Social Exclusion in City and Small Town**

Differences in the social and physical contexts of a city and small town not only influence the possibilities immigrants might have for establishing relations with members of the indigenous local population – they can also influence their subjective experience and the way they interpret social exclusion in their everyday lives. People will experience more or less the same degree of attachment to mainstream society – in the sense of the quality and quantity of the ties they have to indigenous locals – differently depending on whether they have lived in a small place or in a city. A weak attachment to other people seems to be easier to bear in the urban context. My material suggests that in the urban context, immigrants who established only a few weak ties with Norwegians may nevertheless feel satisfied with their social attachment to the mainstream society. In a small local community, this degree of contact will be far from satisfactory. In social environments where everyone seems to know everyone else, those who lack this familiarity may experience intense social exclusion.

Wherever you went – for instance the post office, grocery store, restaurant – people knew each other ... This is not the case in the city ... I was there (in a

small Norwegian town) for a long time, but I felt that I was not a part of that place ... For instance, when I waited in the queue in the grocery store, many people who knew each other would chat together. I was not a part of that. They also knew the shop assistant and she used to joke with them. When it was my turn, she behaved differently. She was polite, but formal...I felt like a total stranger there. Sometimes, I was embarrassed and sad because of that (Bosnian woman).

The stories of my informants suggest that immigrants who live in the city attribute different meanings to their interactions and relations with Norwegians compared to those who live in small local communities. Immigrants in the city do not experience an absence of strong ties with Norwegians so intensively. They did not have the expectation that casual public encounters had to be personal and informal. City-dwelling immigrants explained any lack of strong ties with their Norwegian neighbours and work colleagues as a feature of modern urban life. Several immigrants and refugees who lived in the city were even content with the low degree of attachment they had to the hosts, while for those settled in smaller communities, weak and single stranded ties were less than satisfactory:

During the week, I mostly speak with Norwegians who are strangers to me, for example with employees in various shops ... I cannot say that I am treated differently from other people. They are polite and helpful to all of their costumers ... When I lived there (in a small town), I wanted sometimes to be invisible ... I felt that I did not belong there ... People use to greet one another in the street, but not me ... People outside my apartment used to barbeque, drink beer, play football, etc. I was sometimes embarrassed when I just said hello and walked away ... I sometimes feel that I am lonely here in the city too, but perhaps not as intensely so ... Maybe I do not have the same expectations (Iraqi man).

There is no doubt about it, I felt like a real outsider when I was in there (in a small town). Here in Trondheim, I am more relaxed. I don't feel that the neighbours are my friends exactly, but it seems that that Norwegians neighbours in the building are not friends with one another either. We just say hello to each other, and this is normal. I have not been invited for a visit by anyone, but this does not have anything to do with me. It is normal that city people mind their own business (Iraqi man).

These two accounts may be read as expressing an intuitive sense of modernity in an urban context, characterised by weak tie attachments between people, and by fluctuating segmented networks and identities. It may be also understood as an aspect of their self-examination, where they try to rearrange the internal meaning of their relation with society around them. The stories demonstrate that the kinds of loose attachments to the hosts that many newcomers are limited to (or even find as the best way of dealing with ambivalences about their Norwegian contacts) are not so easy to deal with in smaller places.

In a small town, the problem is not only how to gain entrance into dense networks of hosts, but also that feelings of belonging and acceptance often take it for granted that immigrants have to enter deeply into the full complexity of local relations and networks. We may say that immigrants who manage to integrate into close knit networks within small towns are the lucky ones. They will benefit from the

solidarity of these networks within the frame of 'dense sociability' (Bauman 1990) – as the cases in the previous sections have indicated. In such environments, they will display their desired self within networks characterised by a predominance of primary relations, where people appear as whole individuals rather than as role-fragments. They will enjoy being defined as insiders by indigenous locals.

If I settled in a city, I probably would have as many Norwegian friends as I have here. Every year, I used to visit relatives who live in Oslo. Except through work, they do not have any contact with Norwegians and they seem content with that ... Here, if you do not want to like a total outsider, you have to participate in all kind of activities ... You have to adjust. If I were in Oslo I would maybe do the same as my relatives, take the easiest way out ... I sometimes miss the city. I am a city girl, but I do not regret that settling here ... I do not have any plans to move. I have invested a lot of energy in order to melt into the local community, but I also get something back. I feel accepted here (Bosnian woman).

This immigrant has managed to present herself successfully within the premises of the ethnic majority. She achieves identity affirmation in face-to-face interactions with her Norwegian friends, and within the dense sociability environment of the small town. Unlike her, immigrants who do not adjust to the dense sociability of the small place are considered outsiders. In the dense sociability context, immigrants have to meet natives frequently and to have tight multiplex relationships with them if they want to reproduce their preferred identity as normal and recognised members of the local community. As the above respondent has indicated, such pressure sometimes indeed results in increased participation and an inclination for melting into the mainstream. Unfortunately, most of the immigrants I met did not fulfil these strict requirements. Iraqi respondents in particular considered these integration requirements as not reasonable and far too intrusive. They discouraged them from integrating in the primary networks of the hosts. For most Iraqi immigrants I met, integration within small town context will not only require greater efforts at adjustment – but they also get less reward in the shape of affirmation for their endeavours. Due to cultural problems or to xenophobic attitudes of the hosts, many Iraqi immigrants therefore rejected the small town. When the first chance presented itself, they relocated to multicultural urban areas.

## Conclusion

I have argued that cities and small towns provide different contexts for the reconstruction of social life after immigrants' resettlement. Immigrants who are seen by indigenous locals as not too dissimilar and who have can easily adjust in order gain admittance into primary local groups enjoy the dense sociability of the small town. In contrast to immigrants in the city, the most significant interactions these people have with Norwegians happen within primary relations. They experience strong individualisation and a de-ethnification of the self in everyday life. In the city, immigrants may more easily follow the path of selective social integration. No matter how many Norwegian friends they have, immigrants in the city cannot avoid interacting with indigenous locals who may perceive them

primarily as foreigners. On the other hand, immigrants who do not have the ability or chance to forge strong ties with the mainstream, for example those who appear as culturally distant or stigmatised, will prefer to settle in the city where they may blend into multicultural urban environments. For these immigrants, it may be difficult to achieve the same sense of belonging and social recognition in smaller communities. In small towns, this sense of belonging to a local community demands considerable adjustment and a high degree of social integration into the informal social networks of indigenous locals.

For immigrants who did not gain admission into primary groups of indigenous locals, the small town seemed like a cold, unpleasantly transparent and xenophobic environment. After they moved to the city, these individuals found the urban environment to be a more favourable frame for reconstructing their social life after resettlement. These people also felt that forming weak tie bridges with the mainstream society was more straightforward in an urban city context. In their view, it was less problematic to be loosely attached to others in social contexts predominantly characterised by interactions that took place within the frame of secondary relations. As the above stories indicate, the meanings that immigrants assign to their social marginalisation and exclusion are not only projections of their “real” social attachment to their hosts, but are also related to their ideas of what constitutes a normal level of inclusion in a particular location. Nor are these meanings disconnected from their contextual frames. In the city, immigrants who are weakly attached to the host society may still interpret their situation as the norm. They can more easily convince themselves that their segregation has nothing to do with them as individuals, or with Norwegian hostility to their ethnic group. Instead, they imagine and accept that it is normal for people living in modern urban environments to have weak attachments to their neighbours, workmates and friends. The everyday experiences of immigrants in small towns allowed for no such “positive” interpretations of their marginal position. They experienced being visibly different. They were real outsiders. They felt ethnic stigma which could not be avoided in their everyday lives. Unlike the city, where both immigrants and indigenous people often engage in impersonal interactions with each other in public life, immigrants in the small town felt that they were in densely sociable contexts where their state of social isolation was unusual. They gradually began asking themselves why they were not included. As a result, marginalised identities of non-belonging were constructed, as well as an eagerness to move out of the town.

The findings presented here are very much in line with classical sociological descriptions of social relations and networks in cities and small towns (Park 1952; Wirth 1969). However, in respect to the settlement of immigrants and refugees they are still highly relevant. Norwegian authorities have made known their policy that newcomers should be settled in municipalities of a certain size in order to reduce uncontrolled secondary migration from local communities to urban areas. It seems however, during the implementation of this policy, that the Norwegian authorities still did not and does not focus enough on immigrants’ social life. The authorities



do not adequately evaluate how different categories of newcomer will be perceived by indigenous locals and how capable different immigrant groups may be in achieving identity reproduction and social incorporation in different local communities.

The fact that certain categories of immigrants and refugees are more stigmatised or appear as culturally distant by the locals, and therefore will have difficulties melting into the smaller local communities, is still not taken seriously enough. This negligence may partly explain why a majority of non-European immigrants relocate to urban areas not long after being settled in small towns and villages. In extreme cases, this means that some people stay first in one or several reception centres. Afterwards, they live a few years in the place allocated to them for settlement, before moving again. After each resettlement, they have to reconstruct their social life from scratch. Some of my informants have been moved two or three times between different reception centres, then settled in a rural district before finally moving to more urban areas. With each migration, they lose contact with most of their friends and acquaintances from their previous place. It is not difficult to see that such uprooting has negative effects on their social integration, feelings of marginality and sense of belonging.

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### About the Author

Marko Valenta is senior researcher at the Centre for Migration Research and Refugee Studies, Norwegian University of Science and Technology (NTNU, Trondheim). His fields of interest are interethnic interaction, everyday life and the integration of ethnic minorities. His research interests also include reception of asylum seekers, repatriation of refugees and multicultural education. E-mail: marko.valenta@svt.ntnu.no